

# *The* Good News

July-August 2003

A M A G A Z I N E O F U N D E R S T A N D I N G

## Can You Believe Bible Prophecy?

The Bible Was Right After All • The Silent Epidemic That's Killing Our Kids  
America and Britain's Global Reach Prophesied? • Virginity: Is It Worth It?

## Does Bible Prophecy Matter?



The biblical record of prophecy is long and astoundingly accurate. No human seer could have accurately predicted the remarkable rise and fall of kingdoms, leaders and peoples that we find in the Bible.

“For I am God,” He declares, “and there is no other; I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand . . .’” (Isaiah 46:9-10). God alone has the power to foretell the future—and then bring it to pass.

But why does God reveal the future? One crucial reason is *so we can see the need to change*. God reveals the future so each of us, individually, can personally *repent*—change our way of living and begin living as He tells us to—and avoid suffering God’s judgment on the world as these prophetic events unfold. He tells us what is coming to motivate us to make the changes we need to make in our lives, both personally and nationally.

God’s pleadings with ancient Israel and Judah are revealing. He sent His prophet Ezekiel with a heartfelt appeal: “Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked *turn from his way and live*. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die . . .?’” (Ezekiel 33:11, emphasis added throughout).

God doesn’t want to punish anyone. But, like any loving parent, He knows that sometimes we need a painful lesson in discipline to prevent even greater pain and suffering further down the line.

He has also given us laws, summarized in the Ten Commandments, that bring great blessings when we obey them—because they teach us a way of life that shows love for Him and for our fellow man (Matthew 22:37-40). These laws also have opposite consequences when we ignore or disobey them. When we break them, they inevitably bring painful results and, in turn, *break us*. Sadly, few are willing to humbly submit to God and allow themselves to learn this lesson.

Throughout His Word, God reveals the events, trends and conditions that will engulf the world at the time of the end. Near the end of the book of Daniel is the warning that this will be “a time of distress *such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then*” (Daniel 12:1, New International Version). The *whole world* will be overtaken by one unprecedented disaster after another.

Notice Jesus Christ’s own description of the time leading up to His return: “It will be a *time of great distress, such as there has never been before since the beginning of the world, and will never be again*. If that time of troubles were not cut short, *no living thing could survive*; but for the sake of God’s chosen it will be cut short” (Matthew 24:21-22, Revised English Bible). This time will be so perilous, He warns, that *mankind will be in danger of extinction*. Considering the remarkably accurate prophecies of the Bible, *this should surely get our attention*.

God’s prophecies are sure. He foretold the decline and fall of many nations for their sins—including many of the leading nations and peoples of our day. What about you? Will you be among them?

Notice also in Christ’s warning the good news that, “*for the sake of God’s chosen*,” total annihilation won’t come. These are the few who truly *believe* God, and have the faith, courage and willingness to *act* on that belief. They are truly willing to *repent*—to change their lives, to surrender to God, to give up everything, if necessary, to humbly submit to and follow a God who has promised them *everything* in return.

In that most remarkable book of Bible prophecy He assures them, “He who overcomes *shall inherit all things*, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Revelation 21:7). What a loving promise from the Creator of all things! Are you willing to take the steps necessary to claim it?

—Scott Ashley

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# Table of Contents



What does Bible prophecy mean for you? 4

Cover Feature	
<b>Can You Believe Bible Prophecy?</b>	
<i>Between a fourth and a third of the Bible concerns prophecy. History shows that God's unerring prophecies of the kingdoms and empires of Egypt, Israel, Judah, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome all came to pass in minute detail. If His prophecies came true in centuries past, can you—and should you—believe in Bible prophecy today? . . . . .</i>	<b>4</b>

## The Bible Was Right After All

<i>Bible critics and skeptics can be found everywhere. However, there are also inspiring cases of some who looked at the facts and changed their minds. What kind of evidence brought about their surprising turnarounds? . . . . .</i>	<b>8</b>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------



A silent epidemic is taking a devastating toll 16

## America and Britain's Global Reach—Prophesied in the Bible?

<i>The United States and Britain were close allies in defeating European tyranny in two world wars. They then crushed Iraqi tyranny twice in the last 12 years. Why has it fallen to these two powers to police the world? . . . . .</i>	<b>11</b>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

## Teen Sex: The Silent Epidemic That's Killing Our Kids

<i>A silent epidemic that is sweeping the Western world infects thousands more teenagers every day. Most parents have little idea how bad this epidemic is, much less how to fight it. Yet there are solid biblical solutions. . . . .</i>	<b>16</b>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

## Making Sense of a Fragmenting World

<i>Why does it seem as though the world is going crazy? We're bombarded with news of terrorism, shifting geopolitical alliances and an increasingly divided world. What does it mean, and how can we make sense of it all? . . . . .</i>	<b>21</b>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

## Was Noah's Flood Universal?

<i>Was the Flood of Genesis universal, engulfing the entire earth? Or was it only regional, covering a relatively small area? This question has troubled many readers of the Genesis story. How can we discover the truth? . . . . .</i>	<b>22</b>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

## Noah's Ark: Was It Possible?

<i>Many unbelievers have scoffed at the biblical account of Noah's ark and the Flood, assuming it impossible that all animal life could have been saved on a primitive boat. But their criticisms rest on mistaken assumptions. . . . .</i>	<b>24</b>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------

## God Values Everyone—Do We?

<i>Limitless opportunities exist for volunteers to help adults and children afflicted with disabilities. Giving of your time and energy can make a difference to both them and you—and help fulfill Christ's instructions. . . . .</i>	<b>26</b>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------



Important lessons from helping the disabled 26

Regular Features	
<b>World News and Trends</b> <i>An Overview of Conditions Around the World . . . . .</i>	<b>14</b>
<b>Letters From Our Readers</b> <i>Readers of The Good News share their thoughts . . . . .</i>	<b>28</b>
<b>Questions and Answers</b> <i>Answers to readers' questions . . . . .</i>	<b>29</b>
<b>Just for Youth</b> <i>Virginity: Is It Worth It? . . . . .</i>	<b>30</b>

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# Can You Believe Bible Prophecy?

God's unerring prophecies of the kingdoms and empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome all came to pass in minute detail. If the Creator's prophecies came true in centuries past, can you—and should you—believe in Bible prophecy today?

by Jerold Aust

**D**id you know that archaeologists and historians alike have repeatedly verified specific Bible prophecies made hundreds of years before their fulfillment? You probably haven't heard much about this, because it's not the kind of facts they or most people are comfortable publicizing or talking about.

Nevertheless, it's time that you were made aware of such prophecies and their fulfillment, for they can help change your life and prepare you for the events foretold regarding our future.

God declares that His prophecies are sure: “. . . I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand . . .’” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

He challenges any skeptic to do what He does—prophecy the future and make it come to pass! “‘Present your case,’ the LORD says. ‘Bring forward your strong arguments’ . . . Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; as for the former events, declare what they were, that we may consider them, and know their outcome; or announce to us what is coming” (Isaiah 41:21-23, New American Standard Bible).

## Why prophecy?

Between a fourth and a third of the Bible concerns prophecy, so God obviously considers it quite important. But why did He inspire so much prophecy to be recorded for us?

One reason is that, as noted in these two passages from Isaiah, *fulfilled prophecy proves God's existence*. No mere human being can accurately and consistently predict future events in great detail hundreds if not thousands of years before they take place. Yet the biblical prophets did so hundreds of times.

God revealed the future through these human messengers, inspired those messages to be written down and preserved for us, and then He brought those very specific

prophecies to pass—hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years later. Nothing but a divine, supernatural Being could possess such power.

But there are other important reasons for prophecy, too. We might consider prophecy as foretelling the result of mankind's conduct, good or bad.

The bedrock of why prophecy exists is based on the fundamental principles of human behavior found in Leviticus 26. Here God reveals the outcome of human affairs depending on how people conduct themselves toward Him and each other.

Humanity is without excuse since God makes His Word available to all people. From Israel and Judah's occasional

tion of God's *power and wisdom*, but it presents His response to man's need.

“Since man is ignorant of what a day may bring forth, the revelation of God's will for the present and the disclosure of His plans and purposes for the future are of inestimable benefit to the believer. In the light of these facts, widespread neglect of biblical prophecy is not only tragic but inexcusable” (*The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 1988, p. 1040, “Prophecy,” emphasis added).

Prophecy is not given in a capricious manner. It is given to encourage the righteous to strive for their reward and as a warning to those who persist in evil (see Hebrews 6:10; Matthew 13:43; 25:46; Malachi 4:1).

**Fulfilled prophecy proves God's existence. No mere human being can accurately and consistently predict future events in great detail hundreds if not thousands of years before they take place. Yet the biblical prophets did so hundreds of times.**

obedience to God to their protracted wholesale rebellion against Him, the Bible is full of examples that show how Leviticus 26 is a pivotal foundation underlying so much of Bible prophecy.

The consequences of our actions are spelled out with crystal clarity in Bible prophecy: Do well, reap blessings—do evil, reap curses. Since God made us, He knows how we can best function. His laws are designed for us to enjoy happy, healthy lives. Leviticus 26 is a motivation to do well and a warning to avoid evil. Prophecy is an outgrowth of this formula.

Notice these points one respected Bible dictionary makes regarding prophecy: “Scripture plainly presents prediction as a manifestation of God's power glorifying His Person, exalting His redemptive work in Christ, and *setting forth the divine character of His revealed Word*. Scripture not only presents the prophetic word as a demonstra-

God's Word is faithful, merciful and sure.

## Prophecy keeps us on track

Exactly how do human beings bring blessings or punishment on themselves? Consider the example of King Saul of Israel.

Saul was humble before he was anointed as king over Israel. Slowly he strayed from God. Finally, God gave Saul a defining test to reveal His loyalty to Him: Go and completely destroy the merciless Amalekites (see 1 Samuel 15).

God remembered that the Amalekites had cravenly attacked the weak, the sick, the elderly and the young years earlier when Moses led the Israelites through the desert (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). And He knew that such national traits are passed down to succeeding generations. In God's judgment, the Amalekites were so cruel and heartless that, for the safety of other peoples around them, they needed to be eliminated.

God told Saul to carry out this sentence.

Saul attacked the Amalekites, but he didn't honor God's instructions completely. He let slip God's earlier admonition to the entire nation: "If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God.

However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers" (1 Samuel 12:14-15).

Saul failed the test. He did not completely

past. This can be helpful if we learn from others' mistakes. As the noted philosopher George Santayana put it, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

While it's relatively easy to dig up some remnants of the past, and perhaps even to extrapolate from the past some likely possibilities regarding the future, accurately predicting the future is exceedingly difficult.

For example, parents with newborn babies have no idea what their children will be doing in 20 years. So consider how difficult it would be to single out specific nations when they are no more than small tribes and

from Daniel's time right up to the return of Jesus Christ.

Yet at the end of the book God instructed Daniel to "shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4). This indicates that certain major prophecies that previously wouldn't have made sense *will be understandable as the end approaches*.

The accuracy of Daniel's prophecies of remotely distant events is spectacular. For example, in the "70 weeks" prophecy recorded in Daniel 9:24-27, "Daniel predicts the precise year of Christ's appearance and



**The prophet Daniel foretold the rise of mighty empires such as Greece and Rome hundreds of years before these events took place.**



**The Parthenon in Athens, left, stands as a reminder of Greece's power much as the Colosseum in Rome represented Rome's might.**

destroy the Amalekites. He failed his people and he failed his Creator. God rejected him as king, telling him through Samuel: "... Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

Comparing 1 Samuel 12 with chapter 15, the prophetic formula worked flawlessly. Obedience brings a favorable outcome. Disobedience brings an unfavorable one.

This is why it's so important that we study biblical prophecy: Prophecy benefits humanity because it can help keep all of us, whether an individual, a family or a nation, *on track* with God.

How does it do this? Recognizing that Bible prophecies have been fulfilled builds faith—which not only helps us *believe* in prophecy, but encourages us also to *act responsibly* on that belief.

### Prophecy builds faith

Archaeologists and historians may spend their lifetimes exploring or digging up the

then predict in detail what their end would be! This is far beyond any human being's ability, yet that is precisely what Scripture claims to do.

The wise build faith in the Bible and its promises by investigating whether its prophetic claims have proven accurate and true. If the Bible's prophecies regarding events that have already transpired have been proven true by archaeologists and historians, doesn't it make sense for us to pay close attention to what Scripture says *will yet happen* in the future?

### Daniel foretells rise and fall of empires

Many of the Bible's prophecies have been validated—showing it to be the genuine Word of God. Some of the major fulfilled prophecies include the rise and fall of the empires that would dominate the Middle East for many centuries.

The Hebrew prophet Daniel, in the book that bears his name, prophesied events fulfilled many centuries ago as well as major events *yet to come*. His book reveals a history of the region, written in advance,

the beginning of his ministry in A.D. 27" (Gleason Archer, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 1985, Vol. 7, p. 9).

Another amazing prophecy recorded by Daniel is his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2. In the second year of his reign the Babylonian king had a troubling dream that none of his counselors could explain. Babylonian culture placed considerable emphasis on dreams, and Nebuchadnezzar was convinced that this one was of great importance (Daniel 2:1-3).

His dream gives us a "disclosure of God's plan for the ages till the final triumph of Christ" and "presents the foreordained succession of world powers that are to dominate the Near East till the final victory of the Messiah in the last days" (*Expositor's*, pp. 39, 46).

Without prior knowledge of its content, Daniel explained the details of the dream to Nebuchadnezzar: "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,

its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay” (Daniel 2:31-33).

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that his Babylonian Empire was represented by the head of gold (verses 37-38). The silver, bronze and iron components of the image, or statue, represented three powerful empires that were to follow mighty Babylon (verses 39-40).

This interpretation provided an astounding preview of history. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream occurred and was interpreted by Daniel about 600 B.C. The image represented, in symbolic form, the sequence of great empires that would dominate the region’s political scene for centuries.

Nearly all reputable biblical scholars agree on what the other parts of the image represented. The image’s chest and arms of silver represented the next empire, “Medo-Persia, which began with Cyrus the Great, who conquered Babylon in 539 [B.C.] . . .” (*Expositor’s*, p. 47). This empire defeated Babylon and ruled the Middle East for the next two centuries.

The belly and thighs of bronze symbolized the next empire to dominate the area. “The bronze empire was the Greco-Macedonian Empire established by Alexander the Great . . . The bronze kingdom lasted for about 260 or 300 years before it was supplanted by the fourth kingdom” (ibid.).

### The rise of Rome

Then came the most dominant empire

of all, represented by the image’s legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay. “Iron connotes toughness and ruthlessness and describes the Roman Empire that reached its widest extent under the reign of Trajan” (ibid.). Trajan reigned as emperor A.D. 98-117, and the Roman Empire itself ruled for many centuries.

The fourth empire was depicted as having

**Daniel foretold the coming of Alexander the Great, depicted here on a Greek coin minted during his reign, twice in his prophetic book, written centuries before Alexander was born. Scholars have identified Alexander as the “notable horn” in Daniel 8:5-8 and as the “mighty king” in Daniel 11:3-4.**



10 toes. The feet and toes were composed partly of iron and partly of clay, as verse 41 explains. What does this mean?

“Verse 41 deals with a later phase or outgrowth of this fourth empire, symbolized by the feet and ten toes—made up of iron and earthenware, a fragile base for the huge monument. The text clearly implies that this final phase will be marked by some sort of federation rather than by a powerful single realm” (ibid.). The Roman Empire, then, is eventually prophesied to transition into

a *final* phase composed of a coalition or federation of peoples and/or nations.

Additional aspects of this succession of empires were revealed to Daniel in a later dream. This time the four empires were represented by four beasts: a lion (Babylonian Empire), a bear (Medo-Persian Empire), a leopard (Greco-Macedonian Empire) and a fourth beast described as “terrible” and unlike the other three (Daniel 7:1-7).

Notice what verse 7 says about this fourth creature: “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet.”

What does this description mean?

This, too, is a reference to the great power of Rome, which crushed all who opposed it. “Thus the superior power of the colossus of Rome . . . is emphasized in the symbolism of this terrible fourth beast” (*Expositor’s*, p. 87).

But notice that the next few verses, 9-14, take us seamlessly right through to Christ’s establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth: “Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed” (verse 14).

## Fulfilled Prophecies of Jesus Christ

What could be more amazing than to read precise predictions of the events of a person’s life hundreds of years before his birth? Surely that would be a mark of divine knowledge and involvement, wouldn’t it?

The Old Testament is filled with just such prophecies—giving minute details of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, providing overwhelming evidence that there is a mind and power at work that far transcends the human mind. The accuracy of such prophecies shows us why we can—and should—believe in Bible prophecy.

Psalms 89:3-4 prophesies that Jesus would be a descendant of King David: “I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.” Isaiah 11:1 similarly prophesies that “there shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse [David’s father], and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” Jesus’ genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 verify that these prophecies were fulfilled.

God inspired Isaiah to tell us that Jesus would be born of a virgin: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14; confirmed in Matthew 1:18-23).

Additionally, Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem was foretold: “But you, Bethlehem Ephra- thah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2; confirmed in Matthew 2:1, 5-6).

Specifically, Jesus would live in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2) and in Nazareth: “Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles” (Isaiah 9:1). Matthew verified that this prophecy was fulfilled (Matthew 4:12-16).

Jesus would be announced by an Elijah-like herald, John the Baptist: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 40:3-5). Again, Matthew confirmed this prophecy’s fulfillment (Matthew 3:1-3).

Jesus Christ’s mission would include the Gentiles: “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1). Gospel writer Matthew, a Jew, recognized Jesus’ fulfillment of this specific prophecy: “Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen, my Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will declare justice to the Gentiles . . . And in His name Gentiles will trust” (Matthew 12:18, 21).

Other significant prophecies detailing the personal life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ were written down hundreds of years before they happened. A friend of Jesus would betray Him (compare Psalm 41:9 with Matthew 26:14-16). Jesus would die like a criminal (compare Isaiah 53:9, 12 with Mark 15:27-28). A rich man would bury Him in his own tomb (compare Isaiah 53:9 with Matthew 27:57-60).

Not one of Jesus’ bones would be broken (compare Psalm 34:20 with John 19:32-36). Soldiers would cast lots for His garments (compare Psalm 22:18 with John 19:24). Jesus’ side would be pierced (compare Zechariah 12:10 with John 19:34-37).

All these prophecies and more were written about the life, sacrifice and death of our Savior, hundreds of years before any of these events happened. There is no question that you and I can believe in Bible prophecy, for the One who foretold such important events is able to bring them about in every detail.

# A Ruler's Actions Foretold More Than a Century Before They Happened

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah lived and prophesied in dangerous times. Through much of his ministry, the people and rulers of the kingdom of Judah had vacillated between faithfulness to God and succumbing to the sensuous appeal of the idolatry and paganism that had long plagued the kingdom.

Through Isaiah and other prophets, God warned that, unless the nation repented of their idolatry and returned to Him, they would be invaded and forcibly carried away into exile.

Perhaps most astonishing, though, is the fact that God foretold the *very name* of the monarch who would allow the Jews to return from exile and rebuild the temple—well over a century before it happened!

The Babylonian Empire fell to Cyrus, leader of the Medo-Persian Empire, in 539 B.C. Cyrus thus took over the Babylonian Empire—including its thousands of exiled Jews. He issued a decree, recorded in Ezra 1:2-4, that the Jews in Babylon could return to Jerusalem:

What is this telling us? That this Roman system *will exist again at the time of the end when Jesus Christ returns to rule the earth*. The system has never completely gone away. It has continued through periodic revivals over the centuries—and the final revival of this empire will fight Christ at His coming.

Revelation 17 also helps us in understanding how this will take place. In this chapter another beast is mentioned, and its 10 horns are specifically identified as symbolizing “ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast” (verse 12).

These 10 rulers “are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast” (verse 13). This final phase or revival of the Roman Empire will lead directly into Christ’s return, because these 10 rulers “make war with the Lamb”—Jesus Christ—at His return to earth (verse 14).

All of this concurs with Daniel 2:41-43, which explains the meaning of the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream having feet of iron mixed with clay. “Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom . . . this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle . . . the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay” (New International Version).

The rulers and nations that make up this final federation, then, will be of different peoples. This unwieldy confederation will be difficult to hold together, and indeed it will not last long. As we saw in Revelation 17, Jesus Christ will destroy this alliance at His return: “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the

“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house [temple] at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:2-3).



**The cylinder of Cyrus (538 B.C.), king of Persia, records his conquest of Babylon and policy of religious tolerance. He decreed that the Jewish exiles taken captive by the Babylonians could return to their land and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. The artifact is now on display in the British Museum.**

The temple reconstruction began in 536 B.C. and was completed in 516—70 years after the destruction of the first temple during the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. And amazingly, it was made possible by a king named by the prophet Isaiah more than a century earlier.

Notice God’s remarkable prophecy in Isaiah 44:24, 28: “Thus says the LORD . . . Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, “You shall be built,” and to the temple, “Your foundation shall be laid.”’”

kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

The greater part of these prophetic events, as detailed by the two dreams recorded in Daniel, has already been fulfilled. Their detailed completion affirms the divine inspiration of the Bible. The odds of any person foreseeing this on his own defy credibility. As Daniel explains, “There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days” (Daniel 2:28).

## Will future prophecies come to pass?

Since God has brought to pass His prophecies pertaining to events now past, who are we to presume He can’t bring about His prophecies of events still future? Let’s outline the major events prophesied to happen in these and related prophecies that will dramatically change the world in the coming years:

- God says that the rise of this end-time world government (symbolized by a “beast” in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and 17) will bring about a time called the “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14)—a time of global turmoil unparalleled in human history.
- He also calls the human head of this end-time power “the beast” (Revelation 17:12-13) and tells us that a powerful religious figure called “the false prophet” will work in conjunction with the Beast to incite a great persecution of those who do not submit to the authority of this system, including true Christians (Revelation 19:20; 13:15).
- At the right time, God promises to send Jesus Christ, the Messiah, back to earth to

save mankind from itself by waging war against the Beast, the False Prophet and their end-time empire (Revelation 19).

- After Christ destroys these evil human beings and their forces, He will then direct His attention to Satan and the demons and remove them and their unseen, unrecognized influence and power (Revelation 20:1-3).

- Christ will then become the ruler over the earth, and His government will be established on earth for 1,000 years and more.

All these things are prophesied to take place—and they surely will.

We have addressed only a few of the prophecies recorded in the Bible, sure prophecies of God that came to pass. The Scriptures contain many more such prophecies that could well directly affect your life and the lives of your family.

Will you take them to heart, believe God and heed His warnings of the dangerous times ahead? **GN**

## Recommended Reading

You can believe in Bible prophecy, for God’s Word is true and sure and He cannot lie. To help you better understand Bible prophecy, we’ve prepared thoroughly researched, eye-opening booklets on major aspects of these prophecies. Request or download your free copies of *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*, *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*, *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Also, to better understand the prophesied trends taking place in today’s world, request your free subscription to our monthly newsletter *World News & Prophecy*.



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# The Bible Was Right After All

Bible critics and skeptics abound, but there are inspiring cases of some who have changed their minds. What kind of evidence brought about their surprising turnarounds?

by Mario Seiglie

**B**y all accounts, Lee Strobel was an ardent Bible critic. This award-winning journalist of the *Chicago Tribune* didn't believe in God or the Bible. Having graduated from Yale Law School, he had honed his skills in reporting important legal cases and had little respect for the Holy Scriptures.

"For much of my life," he writes, "I was a skeptic. In fact, I considered myself an atheist. To me, there was far too much evidence that God was merely a product of wishful thinking, of ancient mythology, of primitive superstition" (*The Case for Christ*, 1998, p. 13).

Yet he came to admit there was a hidden reason for his skepticism about God and Christianity: "I had read just enough philosophy and history to find support for my skepticism—a fact here, a scientific theory there, a pithy quote, a clever argument. Sure, I could see some gaps and inconsistencies, but I had a strong motivation to ignore them: a self-serving and immoral lifestyle that I would be compelled to abandon if I were ever to change my views and become a follower of Jesus" (*ibid.*).

Accepting a challenge from his wife, however, he launched into a thorough investigation concerning God, the Bible and Jesus Christ. "I plunged into the case," he continues, "with more vigor than with any story I had ever pursued. I applied the training I had received at Yale Law School as well as my experience as legal affairs editor of the *Chicago Tribune*. And over time the evidence of the world—of history, of science, of philosophy, of psychology—began to point to the unthinkable" (p. 14).

The "unthinkable" for Mr. Strobel meant reluctantly accepting he had been wrong. He spent two years carefully gathering evidence as if he were conducting a court trial, including interviewing 13 leading scholars with impeccable credentials. The results stunned him, and he gradually accepted that the Bible was true and that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. As a consequence, he mentions in his book, he became a Christian.

How many times have similar situations occurred? Many intelligent skeptics, when challenged to carefully examine the case for God and the Bible, have eventually come to

accept the evidence that God exists and the Bible was right after all. What kind of evidence did they find to convince them? Here are some more examples.

## An astronomer considers the evidence

Allan Sandage, one of the world's leading astronomers, was another skeptic about a God who could create the universe.



**"A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is."**

During the 20th century, astronomers such as Dr. Sandage had two main astronomical models that attempted to explain the origins of the universe. The first was the "steady state" theory, which postulated the universe had no beginning and matter had always existed. The second was the "big bang" theory, which described the universe, composed of energy and matter, as having come to existence at a given moment in time. Today, as more astronomical evidence has come to light, the big bang theory has convincingly won out.

At first, this finding made many scientists uncomfortable. They felt the data they collected led to a strikingly similar conclusion to the opening words in Genesis 1:1—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Moreover, a former director of NASA, Robert Jastrow, remarked in his book *God and the Astronomers* that, as the big bang

theory gained ground, his colleagues became increasingly angry. "In fact," he comments, "some prominent scientists began to feel the same irritation over the expanding universe that Albert Einstein had expressed earlier. Arthur Eddington [a famous British astronomer] wrote in 1931, 'I have no axe to grind in this discussion, but the notion of a beginning is *repugnant* to me'" (1978, p. 112, emphasis added).

Mr. Jastrow summarizes what the astronomers found annoying: "A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our Universe; but if it does, science cannot find out what the explanation is. The scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.' It is unexpected because science has had such extraordinary success in tracing the chain of cause and effect backward in time.

"Now we would like to pursue that inquiry

farther back in time, but the barrier to further progress seems insurmountable. It is not a matter of another year, another decade of work, another measurement, or another theory; at this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation.

"For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries" (p. 116).

In 1998, Allan Sandage met with other astronomers at a conference in Berkeley, California, and admitted that contemplating the majesty of the big bang theory had helped make him a believer in God. He was willing to accept that creation could only



be explained as a miracle from God.

“Not that long ago,” says *U.S. News and World Report*, “such a comment from an establishment scientist would have been shocking . . . Today, ‘intellectuals are beginning to find it respectable to talk about how physical law seems to favor life,’ notes Ian Barbour, a professor of both religion and physics at Carleton College, in Northfield, Minnesota” (“Scientists and Theologians Find Common Ground,” July 20, 1998, online edition, p. 2).

### The crumbling theory of evolution

Law professor Philip Johnson of the University of California at Berkeley was another skeptic about God and the Bible.

He reminisces about how his life was changed in 1987 when he went on a sabbatical leave to the University of London. Browsing through a bookstore, an intriguing title caught his eye—*The Blind Watchmaker*, by noted British biologist Richard Dawkins.

Up to this time, Professor Johnson had believed the theory of evolution satisfactorily explained the origin of life. Then he read this popular book that fiercely defended the evolutionary theory by an author who relegated those who believed in God and the Bible as being “ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I’d rather not consider that)” (*Darwin on Trial*, 1993, p. 9).

As a law professor, Dr. Johnson was surprised by the lack of objective evidence for the theory and became suspicious when he read the heated and demeaning attacks against those who doubted the theory.

“The theory,” he writes, “is sustained largely by a propaganda campaign that relies on all the usual tricks of rhetorical persuasion: hidden assumptions, question-begging statements of what is at issue, terms that are vaguely defined and change their meaning, attacks on straw men, selective citation of evidence, and so on. The theory is also protected by its cultural importance. It is the officially sanctioned creation story of modern society, and publicly funded educational authorities spare no effort to persuade the public to believe in it” (*Objection Sustained*, 1998, p. 9).

So began the “intelligent design” movement, which has gained many adherents among scientists and educators. “Backers of the intelligent design,” reports *The New York Times*, “organized university-sanctioned conferences at Yale and Baylor last year and the movement has spawned at least one university student organization—called Intelligent Design and Evolution Awareness, or the IDEA club—at the University of California in San Diego” (“Evolutionists Battle New

Theory on Creation,” online edition, April 8, 2001, p. 2).

As a result of his research, Philip Johnson came to confirm his belief in God and the validity of the Bible.

### Ahead of its time regarding environment

The subject of ecology, the science of preserving the natural environment, might not appear to have anything to do with God and the Bible—but it does. Despite the critics, the Scriptures were well ahead of their time.

In 1962, Rachel Carson published a book, *Silent Spring*, documenting the harm pesticides were causing in the countryside. Soon an environmental movement started that awakened the world to man’s destruction of the environment through pesticides,

**“The theory [of evolution] is sustained largely by a propaganda campaign that relies on all the usual tricks . . . : hidden assumptions, question-begging statements . . . , terms that are vaguely defined and change their meaning, . . . selective citation of evidence, and so on.”**

industrial waste, deforestation and pollution. Before this time, it seemed as if the earth had endless resources and was invulnerable to man’s activities.

Now everyone is aware of the issue—and many are quite concerned. Yet the Bible had already laid out basic principles to avoid contaminating one’s surroundings. Regarding human waste disposal, it said: “. . . You shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse” (Deuteronomy 23:12-13).

This process of properly eliminating human waste ensured the environment would be preserved without breeding diseases. “It is a noteworthy attempt,” says *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “to control the spread of such insect-borne diseases as ophthalmia and poliomyelitis” (1982, Vol. 2, p. 644, “Heal”).

Another law that served to contain the spread of harmful pathogens is found in Leviticus 11:35-36: “. . . Everything on which a part of any such carcass falls shall be unclean; whether it is an oven or cooking stove, it shall be broken down; for they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you. Nevertheless a spring or a cistern, in which there is plenty of water, shall be clean, but whatever touches any such carcass becomes unclean.”

“Observance of these rules,” notes the same encyclopedia, “would reduce the

incidence of infectious fevers and diseases such as cholera, spirochetal jaundice, poliomyelitis, and bubonic plague. The legislation was the first of its kind to recognize that infection could be transmitted by both food and water” (ibid.).

Today one of the greatest dangers to the environment is the indiscriminate cutting of trees that depletes forests, increases erosion and destroys many of the animal habitats. The Bible talks about tree conservation when it says, “When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them . . .” (Deuteronomy 20:19-20).

Unlike other ancient peoples who disregarded the environment, the Israelites were

exhorted by God to regard trees, especially fruit trees, as a valuable resource to be preserved and not to be indiscriminately destroyed.

Yet another biblical example of an ecological principle is found in Deuteronomy 22:6-7: “If a bird’s nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.”

God gave this principle for the preservation of the species. He commanded that the mother bird be protected so she could breed again to quickly replenish the species. This law was to prevent species from being consumed into extinction—as has happened to some through man’s careless disregard of such laws.

We can be thankful that many of these laws of conservation have now been discovered by scientists and are being applied throughout much of the world. Trees are carefully preserved and, when cut down, new ones are planted in their place. Sewage is now properly disposed of in many areas, and animals that breed are valued and protected so they can replenish their species.

### Digging up proof through archaeology

William Ramsay, an early 20th-century British scholar, was born to atheist parents—

and then proudly followed in their footsteps. This eminent professor of humanities diligently prepared himself in the fields of archaeology and geography before departing for the Middle East and Asia Minor to prove the Bible was full of myths. He was sure he would succeed in debunking the Bible by carefully applying the scientific method to the historical aspects of the biblical accounts.

After a quarter century of research in the Holy Land and Asia Minor and carefully retracing the narratives of the Bible, especially those of the book of Acts, this famous unbeliever astounded the intellectual world by announcing he had converted to Christianity. He confessed this radical change was greatly due to the surprising accuracy he had found in Luke's accounts in the book of Acts.

"Luke is a historian of the first rank," he concluded. "Not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense . . . In short this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians" (*The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, 1953, p. 80).

Ramsay wrote many books on the historical and geographical accuracy of Acts and the Epistles of Paul and was knighted for his contributions in the fields of archaeology and geography.

### Health and the Bible

Many physicians are skeptical about the medical worth of the health laws in the Bible, but there are important modern practices that have derived from these for which they should be grateful.

In the Middle Ages, two of the most terrible plagues to afflict Europe were the Black Death and leprosy. One third of all Europeans died in the 14th century as a result.

Dr. George Rosen, a professor of public health at Columbia University, wrote about the horrors of these plagues: "Leprosy cast the greatest blight that threw its shadow over the daily life of medieval humanity. Fear of all other diseases taken together can hardly be compared to the terror spread by leprosy. Not even the Black Death in the 14th century or the appearance of syphilis toward the end of the 15th century produced a similar state of fright" (*History of Public Health*, 1958, p. 62).

Physicians tried everything, but failed to control these terrible plagues. Some medical doctors thought they were a result of eating hot food, garlic or sick pigs. Others believed they were a result of an evil conjunction of the planets.

How were these devastating plagues halted? "Leadership was taken by the church," adds Dr. Rosen, "as the physicians

had nothing to offer. The church took as its guiding principle the concept of contagion as embodied in the Old Testament. This idea and its practical consequences are defined with great clarity in the book of Leviticus. Once the condition of leprosy had been established, the patient was to be segregated and excluded from the community . . . It accomplished the first great feat in methodical eradication of the disease" (p. 63).

Seeing the positive results on leprosy, European countries used the same procedures to combat the Black Death—known today as the bubonic plague—and were able to stem the disease. Millions of lives were saved by applying this biblical injunction: "Now the leper on whom the sore is, his



## How were these devastating plagues halted? The church took as its guiding principle the concept of contagion as embodied in the Old Testament.

clothes shall be torn and his head bare . . . He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp" (Leviticus 13:45-46).

Furthermore, another aspect that biblical skeptics have ceded ground on is the beneficial effects religion has on health.

Harold Koenig is director of Duke University's prestigious Center for the Study of Religion/Spirituality and Health. In recent decades Dr. Koenig and his team of scientists have conducted numerous studies that indicate religious involvement is associated with better health.

An article in *Christianity Today* titled "Take Ten Commandments and Call Me in the Morning" mentioned the results of these studies. "Using both anecdotal and research data, Koenig demonstrates that there is ample evidence to show that people who regularly attend church, pray, read, and put into practice what the Bible or their faith teaches are overall healthier.

"Just for starters, they have significantly lower blood pressure, are hospitalized less, recover from surgery faster, have stronger immune systems, and are likely to live longer. Emotional health also benefits: family life is better and depression is lower in those with faith" (online edition, Nov. 20, 1999, p. 2).

### Time to examine the evidence

There will always be Bible skeptics—for they know much is at stake. History has shown that civilizations rise and fall according to their prevailing beliefs.

In fact, the ancient Greek civilization fell in part because philosophers began to ridicule the notion that gods lived atop nearby Mount Olympus. Although the Bible makes it clear that these religious beliefs were wrong, many Greeks associated them with the moral underpinnings of society, and the result was a relaxing of the nation's morals. As the Greeks experienced, when doubt and absolute liberty to do as one pleases sets in, moral degeneration is not far behind, and then a general weakening of the nation's resolve can lead to a successful invasion from its enemies.

Today, we are harvesting the seeds of more than a century of skepticism. We live in an increasingly lawless and degenerate society. Some skeptics should know better, but as Lee Strobel put it, they are not willing to give up "a self-serving and immoral lifestyle."

Yet, in spite of all the secular critics who rail against God and the Bible, there are some who, by carefully examining the evidence of the world that surrounds them—be it history, astronomy, archaeology or health—finally come to the conclusion that the Bible was right after all. Then begins a great adventure, for beyond believing it comes the hard part of trying to live it—which is to the lasting benefit of all. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

The Bible has nothing to fear from its critics—after all, they've been proven wrong time and time again. Many sciences have proven the accuracy and validity of the Bible. Don't you think it's about time you considered the evidence? Request or download our free booklet *Is the Bible True?*



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# America and Britain's Global Reach—Prophesied in the Bible?

The United States and Britain combined to defeat European tyranny in two world wars, then Iraqi tyranny twice in the last 12 years. Why has it fallen to them to police the world?

by Melvin Rhodes

**F**ormer British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher inadvertently predicted the outcome of the second Persian Gulf war 10 years before it was fought. Interviewed on an American breakfast television program, she observed: “The great lesson of the 20th century is that whenever the American and British peoples stand together, they always win.”

Certainly in the first two wars of this new century in which both were involved, they also won. The victorious allies triumphed over the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban in Afghanistan and over the fascist regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Prior to the 20th century, the great 19th-century German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck predicted that the most important geopolitical fact of the coming 20th century was that Britain and America spoke the same language. This was to prove fateful for the German-speaking peoples, defeated in two world wars by the two major English-speaking nations and their allies.

Britain and America do not always speak the same language, of course. Sir Winston Churchill, whose father was British and mother American, quipped that British and Americans were “separated by a common language.” There are many subtle differences between the two languages (as with English elsewhere around the world) that can lead to misunderstandings.

America and Britain do not always speak the same language in a figurative sense either. Their national interests sometimes fail to coincide. Geographical location has a lot to do with this—the British sometimes seeing things more from a European perspective. This has increasingly been the case since Britain joined the European Union (formerly the EEC) in 1973. Many Britons remain fully committed to the ideals of European unity, though many others are either anti-European or skeptical at best.

But Mrs. Thatcher's dictum remains

true nonetheless. In both world wars and throughout the Cold War, the United States and Britain usually fought together—and won. Two notable defeats were Vietnam (which Britain stayed out of) and the 1956 Suez Crisis (where America's president did not support British action against Egypt after Egypt nationalized the British- and French-owned Suez Canal). These two

whom the 12 tribes of Israel are descended.

The descendants of one of those sons, Judah, are known today as Jews. So are those who remained with the tribe of Judah at the ancient breakup of the nation. After the death of King Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel with its 12 tribes was divided into two separate kingdoms—the southern kingdom of Judah (comprising Judah, Benjamin and



**“The great lesson of the 20th century is that whenever the American and British peoples stand together, they always win.”**

failures only serve to underscore the truth of Mrs. Thatcher's observation.

She intuitively understood something that was revealed in your Bible thousands of years ago. It's a prophecy about the “latter days” and the global role the United States and the United Kingdom would play.

## Joseph's historic role

In Genesis 49 we see the biblical patriarch Jacob, grandson of Abraham, calling his sons together that he might tell them what would happen to them “in the last days” (verse 1). Jacob, whose name God had changed to Israel, had 12 sons from

many of the Levites) and the northern kingdom of Israel, made up of the rest of the tribes (see 1 Kings 12; 2 Chronicles 10-11).

The northern kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrian Empire in the eighth century B.C., more than a century before the peoples of Judah met a similar fate at the hands of the Babylonians. While many of the Jews later returned from their exile, and those who didn't at least retained their national identity, the 10 northern tribes forgot their identity over time and have been lost to the world. They are now called the “lost 10 tribes of Israel” in world history.

While they were lost to the world, they were not lost to God. In Genesis 49 we note that God foretells the destiny of these tribes “in the last days” prior to Christ’s return—in other words, in our time, now. God knows where the descendants of these ancient tribes are today, and He knew thousands of years ago the significant role they would play at this time.

In verse 22 we begin reading a description of the destiny of the descendants of Joseph, the foremost of the 12 tribes. “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall.” God was here using symbolism to point out that the physical descendants of Joseph were destined to be a fruitful people, a productive people who would spread and bring economic prosperity and development wherever they went.

In the previous chapter, chapter 48, we read more detail about Joseph’s destiny. Jacob, the grandfather, here is giving his blessing to the two sons of Joseph, promising them future greatness. Although Jacob had 12 sons, Joseph was his favorite. Through Joseph, Jacob would pass on the great blessings God had originally promised his grandfather, Abraham. Of Joseph’s two sons, Jacob says, “Bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and *let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth*” (Genesis 48:16, emphasis added throughout).

## This prophecy clearly was never fulfilled in the Jewish people. It was, however, fulfilled in the British Empire and the United States of America.

We should take careful note of the wording here. “Let my name be named on them.” What was Jacob’s name? God changed his name from *Jacob* to *Israel* (Genesis 32:28). Israel (Jacob) is the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. The Jews are only a small fraction of those tribes. The modern Jewish nation in the Middle East calls itself Israel, but that is in some ways a misnomer. While the land of Israel is a biblical designation for this territory, the Jewish people who live there today are descendants of those who made up the ancient kingdom of *Judah*. The descendants of the northern kingdom of Israel, the 10 lost tribes, by and large live elsewhere.

### A great nation and a multitude of nations

Jacob’s new name, Israel, was to be carried by his favorite son and his two boys, Manasseh and Ephraim. Regarding these, Jacob upset his son Joseph by promising the greater part of the birthright promise, the inheritance passed down from Abraham through Isaac to Jacob and now to Joseph’s two sons, to the

youngest son, Ephraim. The custom of primogeniture, whereby the eldest boy receives the bulk of the birthright, was overridden here by divine prerogative.

Under God’s inspiration, Jacob foretold that Ephraim was to become “a multitude of nations” while Manasseh was to “become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he . . .” (Genesis 48:19). “And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh” (verse 20).

The multitude of nations was to become great *before* the great single people. It would also be greater in size, wealth and duration. This prophecy clearly was never fulfilled in the Jewish people.

It was, however, fulfilled in *the British Empire and the United States of America*—two brother nations that are, in fact, the modern descendants of the tribe of Joseph (for more information and detailed historical proof, be sure to request or download our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*).

The United States has been the dominant nation in the world since World War II, a period of almost 60 years. But before American preeminence, the British Empire was the dominant power for two centuries. In size and population the British Empire was greater than the United States. British territory at the fullest extent of the empire totaled 13.9 million

square miles. America’s today is 3.9 million, 10 million less. America’s population is also smaller than was that of the British Empire.

Although the prophecy in Genesis 48 shows that the British Empire, “a multitude of nations,” and the United States, the great single nation, were to be separate political entities, the following chapter does not mention Ephraim or Manasseh. Rather, the prophetic term used to describe both of these peoples “in the last days” is *Joseph*, their shared common ancestor.

Genesis 49:22 foretells that Joseph would be fruitful, bringing economic development wherever his descendants went. When we look at the British Empire a century ago, and at the United States as the American people moved westward, we see that this has been very much the case.

Verses 23 and 24 of Genesis 49 add a further prophecy of the role these two peoples would fulfill. “The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, and the arms

of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob . . .”

Here we see a major *military* role for Joseph. The implication of these verses is that the descendants of Joseph would fight many conflicts against those who envied and hated them, but that God would give them victory. Interestingly, the term “archers” is used, suggesting attacks from afar. One of the great blessings the British and American peoples have enjoyed is a long period of peace at home. The wars they have fought generally have been overseas, sparing their own people from much of the suffering that comes from conflict.

### Joseph’s historic mission

When we look back at the wars the United States and Britain have fought, we find a common theme. These two nations have fulfilled a common purpose. At first it was the British Empire that fulfilled this destiny, followed by the British Commonwealth— independent nations including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, together with the colonies ruled by Britain itself.

Since World War II the United States has supplanted Britain in this role, but Britain and oftentimes those same Commonwealth nations have supported the United States as junior partners in an alliance of common purpose. In the latest conflict, Australia was the third military force supporting the United States and Britain.

What has that purpose been?

To understand this, we have to go back to the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. During a tumultuous period in English history, the nation was able to break away from the Church of Rome, initially under King Henry VIII, but more completely under the rule of his daughter, the first Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603). This year marks the 400th anniversary of her death, the passing of one of the most significant monarchs in world history.

The Protestant Reformation drew its name from the fact that many were protesting against the corruption of the Roman church and the church’s hierarchy. They broke the power of Rome, which for more than 1,000 years had dominated and held back the development of the continent of Europe. Not only did these reformers break Rome’s authority, they also gave us the Bible, a banned book under the Roman church.

The enthusiasm with which the people greeted the publication of the King James Bible in 1611 lasted for centuries, right up until 1900, the first year in which more secular books were published in England than books of a religious nature.

This English translation of the Bible gave people ideas that led to fundamental changes in society, including its form of governance. Democratic institutions, already in place, were gradually strengthened as an educated and self-disciplined Christian people increasingly began to rule themselves. Wherever the British settled in the world, they took with them their Bibles and established parliaments. Thirteen of these parliaments (or Houses of Assembly, or House of Burgesses) later formed the United States of America.

### Fighting for freedom

Meanwhile, continental Europe remained largely under the influence of the Church of Rome, with absolute monarchs claiming rule by “divine right.” Encouraged by the Roman church, some of these monarchs attempted to bring England back under Rome’s authority.

King Philip II of Spain, the most powerful monarch in the world at the time, launched the Spanish Armada against England in 1588—and lost. Many similar struggles would take place in the following centuries against the forces of despotism. At first these wars were mainly, or partly, over religion.

Later, as Britain became a global power, they were mostly against tyrants and despots trying to expand their control over other nations and peoples.

Often the historic role of the British peoples was to fight for freedom against despotism. A cornerstone of British foreign policy for four centuries was to stay out of Europe and concentrate on its empire beyond the seas. The only times Britain would involve itself in European affairs was when one European country was becoming so powerful it threatened the balance of power on the continent.

Through the centuries the British (and later the nations of the British Empire) thwarted, among others:

- The forces of Louis XIV of France, who tried to extend his influence into the Iberian Peninsula during the War of the Spanish Succession.
- His great-grandson Louis XV who tried to conquer the American colonies during the French and Indian Wars (1755-63).
- Napoleon, who brought two decades of war to Europe in his attempt at continental subjugation, ending in 1815.
- Russian Czar Nicholas I, who attempted to take over the crumbling Turkish Empire in the Crimean War (1854-56), a move that would have given Russia control over the Middle East.
- Kaiser Wilhelm II, who tried to dominate Europe in World War I.
- Adolf Hitler, whose goal was world

supremacy in World War II.

Many of these major conflicts were against powers that saw themselves as a continuation of the ancient Roman imperial system.

Additionally, numerous smaller wars broke out around the world as the British often tried to keep apart warring tribes and ethnic groups in the interests of peace and trade.

Drained and battered after World War II, the second world war in 30 years, the British retreated from their global responsibilities, choosing instead to support the United States, which had effectively taken over Britain’s role. The Cold War followed for nearly half a century, with the United States and Britain as allies. In the tumultuous years surrounding the Soviet Union’s collapse, other despots clawed their way to power. Again, America and Britain were at the forefront in combating tyranny.

This is not to say they’ve been perfect. The two have certainly made their share of mistakes. They have committed serious errors of judgment at times in both their foreign and domestic affairs. Worse, the two peoples have moved significantly away from God’s laws in recent decades. Yet God has still chosen to bless their military efforts, especially when they pull together and support each other. But will this continue indefinitely?

### Will America and Britain continue to win?

The Bible warns these two nations, the nations on whom Israel placed his name, of the consequences of turning away from God. Our Creator is very patient. He does not always punish immediately when sin—defined in the Bible as the transgression of God’s law—is committed. But there are always *consequences for sin*. And the peoples of the United States and Britain, once nations dedicated to the Bible—even though they often did not interpret and understand it correctly—have turned progressively further and further away from God’s way.

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people,” the Scriptures tell us (Proverbs 14:34). When the United States and Britain were perceived as a righteous, Christian people, other nations around the world generally held them in much greater respect.

Today the perception is very different as these two nations turn their backs on God and churn out endless sexual filth and gratuitous violence in the form of music, movies and television programs, which are then exported around the world. This has contributed greatly to the rise of Islamic anger, which now threatens the American and British peoples *at home*, seriously diminishing their sense of security.

Of course, many nations have long been deeply resentful of America’s wealth and power and would like nothing more than to see the world’s only superpower humbled if not defeated outright. Even a substantial number of Americans, unaware of their country’s God-given blessings and role, would like to see the United States unilaterally surrender its supremacy and subordinate its national interests to others.

### Facing the consequences

If the United States and Britain (and other English-speaking nations around the world) do not turn back to God, He warns that eventually “the LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth” (Deuteronomy 28:25).

God alone will decide when that moment has arrived, the time when He removes His hand from these two nations whose alliance has been such a formidable force for as long as anyone alive today can remember.

Most people today neither understand or appreciate God’s involvement in the history of the British and Americans peoples, the descendants of Joseph. But the Bible makes it clear. Joseph’s great military strength, witnessed again in the latest Persian Gulf conflict as it was in the first, was directly attributable to God. As the patriarch Jacob long ago prophesied of Joseph’s descendants “in the latter days,” “the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob” (Genesis 49:24).

But what God gives He can also take away. And if the American and British people don’t return to the God who has blessed them, He warns that He will withdraw His blessing and protection. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

How did Britain—a small island nation off the mainland of Europe—grow to oversee the strongest empire the world has ever seen? How did the United States—a ragtag collection of colonies clustered along the coast of an untamed continent—grow to become the world’s greatest superpower ever? The remarkable story of their rise to greatness—and what is yet prophesied to happen to them—is, believe it or not, spelled out in the pages of your Bible. Be sure to request or download your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* to learn the whole incredible story.



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# World News and Trends

## An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

### Teenage sex linked with serious depression

A survey sponsored by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development along with 17 other U.S. federal agencies has revealed a startling link between teenage sexual activity and depression and suicide.

The study revealed that “a quarter of teen girls who said they were sexually active also said they had been depressed ‘a lot of the time’ or ‘most of the time.’” In contrast, most who refrained from sexual activity were “never” or “rarely” depressed. Researchers concluded that “sexually active teens are far more likely to be depressed . . . than those who hold off until marriage” (WorldNetDaily.com).

Three million of the 19 million Americans afflicted by mental depression are teenagers. Commenting on the study, Dr. Meg Meeker, a physician for adolescents, tells us that “this is no surprise because teens are targets of a loose culture promoting promiscuity and excess.” Dr. Meeker goes on to declare that “when you look at sexual activity and teens and you add up the losses they endure, they have lost their virginity, they have lost their self-respect, they have *the loss of a sense of control over their body*, they have a sense of shame” (Christian Broadcasting Network, emphasis added).

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy asked sexually active teens if they regretted early sexual activity. Results showed that three-quarters of girls wished they had delayed sex and a majority of boys and girls regarded their first sexual experience as something they would have preferred to avoid. Regret,

dissatisfaction and guilt, together with the losses previously mentioned, leave teens vulnerable to serious mental depression.

But what does depression among our young sometimes lead them to do? The answer is heart-breaking because prolonged mental depression can easily lead to suicide. “Just in the past decade the rate of teenage suicide has risen 200 percent” (Christian Broadcasting Network).

Researchers also found that 14 percent of girls who

### Researchers found that 14 percent of girls who had had sexual intercourse had attempted suicide—almost triple the percentage of sexually inactive girls.

had had sexual intercourse had attempted suicide—almost triple the percentage of sexually inactive girls. Among boys, the differences were even greater, with 6 percent of sexually active boys having attempted suicide compared to only 1 percent of sexually inactive boys. This kind of link is too profound to ignore.

These severe societal problems, too often afflicting our youth, are compounded by the fact that on average 8,000 American teens are infected with a sexually transmitted disease (STD) every day. This sad state of affairs has repeated itself in the United Kingdom. The health correspondent of the *Daily Mail* recently

reported that “Britain is on the brink of a public health crisis brought about by the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.” This is particularly true among young women.

The British Parliament Health Selective Committee warned that “with the fertility of an entire generation under threat, desperate measures are needed to deter children from having sex without any idea of the consequences.” The British government now believes that young people—teenagers and even younger children—need help in resisting peer pressure (not to mention that from the media) to indulge in early sexual activity.

This is an understatement. Encouraging self-control is only one solution to consider, but parents, teachers and public figures desperately need to set our youth a better example in self-respect and personal discipline. Instead, too often many of today’s celebrities let our young people down. Parents also bear much guilt in this critical area. Too many parents, perhaps partially as a result of their own flawed upbringing, have very ambivalent attitudes towards sex.

Knowledge of the dangers is not enough to resist sexual temptations. For guidance on this subject, be sure to read the two feature articles in this issue, one on the epidemic of teen sex beginning on page 16 and the other about virginity on page 30. (Sources: World-NetDaily.com, Christian Broadcasting Network, *USA Today*, *Daily Mail* [London].)

### Keep your eyes on Berlin

French acquiescence may soon enable Germany to have greater voting power in the European Union (EU). Previously French resistance has resulted in limited and underrepresented German voting power in the EU. However, the leading figure in shaping a new European constitution, Valery Giscard d’Estaing, is spearheading efforts to increase the voting weight of EU countries with larger populations. Excepting Russia (not always considered a part of Europe), Germany leads all European countries with a population of 80 million people.

Economically speaking, Germany historically has usually looked east. So the accession of Poland and seven other Eastern European nations into the EU will augment German power as well. Their economies have interfaced closely with Berlin for quite some time.

Heather Grabbe, Director of Research at the Centre for Eastern European Reform in London, recently remarked that “Germany is still the sleeping giant of Europe.” For further understanding of Berlin’s future role on the European scene, please request our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* (Source: *International Herald Tribune*.)

### Church controversy over same-sex relationships

The Anglican Church is experiencing its most serious crisis since the controversy over ordaining women into the priesthood. In the United States, where the church is known as Episcopalian, a gay man—who left his wife and two young daughters for a man—has been elected as bishop of New Hampshire.

Conservative evangelicals in England have urgently called on the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, to intervene. Commented *The Times*: “He has publicly expressed his sadness at the authorisation of same-sex blessings in a diocese in Canada . . .” Yet according to a major cover story in *The Times*, in the past Dr. Williams “supported the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM)” and “his perceived liberalism on homosexuality dated from the late 1970s.”

“The Bible,” Dr. Williams had argued, “condemns heterosexuals who engage in homosexual acts for gratification, but does not distinguish between gay practice and gay identity. It is therefore unjust to

consign to celibacy those who have never known sexual attraction towards the opposite sex since the Old Testament, especially, lays so much emphasis on the role of physical love, not just breeding.”

In nearly 2,000 years of church history few biblical scholars and theologians have ever understood or argued the Scriptures in this particular manner.

Western society is not traveling down the same road as the plain scriptural teaching of God’s Word. Instead one British family law judge called for “legislation to guarantee the rights of live-in couples, homosexual partners and transsexuals.” Apparently this proposal has enormous parliamentary backing.

The general direction of our Western way of life recalls to mind a prophecy of the apostle Paul (who condemned homosexual practice in any form in Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10): “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). (Sources: *The Times*, *Daily Mail* [both London].)



## Distrust of United States increases around globe

In the wake of the Iraq war anti-American feelings have grown stronger in the Muslim world, according to an extensive new survey conducted in April and May of 20 countries and the areas governed by the Palestinian Authority. Also, prospects for peace in the Middle East appear dim, with 80 percent of those in the Palestinian Authority-controlled areas saying that peaceful coexistence with Israel isn't possible.

In seven of eight Muslim countries surveyed, a

majority of those polled responded that they feared a military invasion from the United States. In Turkey and Indonesia, only 15 percent held a favorable opinion of the United States, and in Jordan and the Palestinian Authority areas the number was a minuscule 1 percent.

In Jordan, Indonesia and Palestinian Authority-controlled areas, all overwhelmingly Muslim, majorities expressed their confidence that Osama bin Laden would "do the right thing in world affairs." Not quite half of those in Pakistan, Morocco and Kuwait—supposedly American allies—agreed.

In Europe, large majorities in Germany, France and Spain believe Europe should pursue greater

independence from the United States, and almost half the Britons polled agreed.

## In Jordan, Indonesia and Palestinian Authority-controlled areas, all overwhelmingly Muslim, majorities expressed their confidence that Osama bin Laden would "do the right thing in world affairs."

The survey also showed sharp drops in approval of the United Nations. A year ago overwhelming majorities in the United States, Germany, France and Britain thought the UN was "a good influence"; now those holding that opinion are clear minorities. (Sources: *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*.)

## The disparity of two different worlds

The recent G8 Conference in Evian, France, reminded us of the shocking disparity extant in our world, particularly when comparing most Western countries with the continent of Africa. For example, life expectancy in the G8 (mainly Western countries) is 77 while the average in Africa is 48. There is almost 100 percent access to clean water in, for instance, the United Kingdom, but the figure is only 45 percent for the troubled Congo.

Canada's average citizen spends about \$2,500 in Canadian dollars annually on health care, but Mali only one paltry dollar. In the developed world about 1.5 million people have the HIV virus, while in Africa 28 million are plagued by this disease.

Consider also the number of people who live on less than a dollar a day. There are none among the G8 nations, but 291 million people eke out such an existence in Africa.

These comparisons were chosen at random and many similar ones could be made. This is one good reason that true Christians should always pray, "Your kingdom come."

If you want to know what God plans to do about the afflictions of our age and to learn of the much different conditions our Creator promises for the world of tomorrow, request or download our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Also see the article about our fragmented world on page 21 of this issue. (Sources: *The Independent* [London], the World Bank, UNICEF, World Resources Institute, University of North Carolina Worldview Program.)

## Resounding Polish vote for EU membership

Poland has opted to enter the European Union in a national referendum that ended in an 82 percent "yes" vote. This result is not without prophetic significance since the population of Poland is 90 percent Roman Catholic and the Polish pope (John Paul II) took serious umbrage to the proposed EU draft constitution since it made no reference at all to Christianity. This was totally unacceptable to the Vatican.

Former Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) once dismissed the power of the Catholic Church by sarcastically asking how many army divisions the pope had. However, many others do recognize its power and influence, and not a few veteran political observers even give the current pontiff the main credit for bringing down the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain. Do not underestimate the future role of the Roman Catholic Church (and Poland) in Europe. If you would like to know more, request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.

Frustrated by some of the actions of the old Europe of France and Germany, but buoyed up by his generous welcome on his recent visit to Poland, U.S. President George Bush has taken considerable consolation from Warsaw's supportive attitude toward the Iraqi war. Although America has recently made diplomatic overtures to both France and Germany, Mr. Bush still considers Poland and some other Eastern European countries as a part of the new, more cooperative, Europe.

A recent *Times* editorial observed that "Poland is not a country that can be slighted by Brussels or patronised by Paris." (Sources: *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* [both London].)

## Is France dying?

Strange as it may sound, France may be dying. The topography remains, but increasingly France is less French and more Muslim—in this instance, more Arabic. "The presence of a huge and growing Muslim population in France has fundamentally altered the identity of the nation," writes *Frontpage Magazine* managing editor Jamie Glazov. "Anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism have become endemic, as France chooses Islamicization and friendship with Arab dictators over friendship with America and Israel.

"The reports that France helped Iraqi officials escape to Europe were not surprising, because France is now the European leader of the Arab world and of Arab interests. In light of these circumstances, many would argue that France is no longer . . . well, France."

Some 30 years ago, France began to lean toward the Arab states for a number of reasons—among them oil, protection from Arab-led terrorists and

trying to show America that it, too, can be viewed as a viable leader of the free world. Watching France's foreign minister speak and vote in the UN Security Council against a U.S. coalition entering Iraq suggests that France desires to be considered a leader in Europe. Such visible dramas could also serve to ingratiate France further to the Arab world.

Why wouldn't Arabs view such actions as encouragement to freely enter their society? If France continues to encourage Arab incursions in their society on many levels, knowingly or not, could this not significantly impact the cultural, religious and ethnic life of France?

The ramifications of France's approach toward Arab states gives pause to reflect. For example, France's neighbor, Germany, might question the geopolitical fallout, not to mention the future desires and designs of the Vatican for a Christian Europe. France may not be dying, but other EU members may begin to question France's far-reaching panache for the sake of the common good. (Source: *Frontpagemagazine.com*.)

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Also, to get a biblical perspective on major events, visit [www.ucg.org/commentary](http://www.ucg.org/commentary) for a weekly commentary on the trends shaping our world.



# Teen Sex: The Silent Epidemic That's Killing Our Kids

Sweeping the world, this silent epidemic is largely ignored by most Western governments—except for misguided programs that often make this devastating problem even worse. Most parents have little idea how bad this epidemic is, much less how to fight it—yet solid biblical solutions exist.

by John Miller

**T**he SARS outbreak makes daily headlines. Governments and the international medical community have mobilized to keep this disease from further spreading around the globe and causing an even greater epidemic.

But a silent epidemic more lethal and widespread is lurking closer to home—at your very doorstep. This epidemic spreads to another 8,000 American teenagers, and thousands more around the world, *every day*.

To put it in perspective, this epidemic infects as many American teens *daily* as the total number of recognized SARS cases reported in the first four months since that disease was first recognized in February of this year.

You would think that a problem of this magnitude would shout from the headlines each day, mobilizing the medical community and U.S. government to declare war on it. But no. Most of the population remains unaware of its magnitude, the victims maintain their silence, and government agencies and institutions dealing with the problem keep barking up the wrong tree. Sadly, those who are most likely to experience the ravages of this epidemic are among those most ignorant of its growing threat.

## Sexual freedom's terrible cost

The truth of the matter is damning: The Western world, and the United States in particular, has flaunted its so-called “sexual freedom” for decades. The results are disastrous, but as a nation we have not yet found the courage to admit just how wrong we were.

If you think your kids are not at risk, think again. A recent book by Meg Meeker, M.D., doctor of adolescent medicine, makes a compelling case based on solid medical research and firsthand clinical experience. Our teens are at risk, she says, and without substantive action casualties will continue to mount. Consider these facts from her 2002 book *Epidemic: How Teen Sex Is Killing Our Kids*:

- Nearly one in four sexually active teens has



**We thought we could have sexual promiscuity without the undesirable results. What we discovered was promiscuity produced far more than unwanted pregnancies.**

at least one sexually transmitted disease (p. 13).

- One in 5 children over 12 tests positive for herpes type 2 (p. 13).

- A British study found that nearly half of girls become infected with a sexually transmitted disease during their first sexual experience (p. 12).

- Herpes has skyrocketed 500 percent in the past 20 years among white American teenagers (p. 13).

- For most sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), especially viruses spread from skin-to-skin contact, condoms offer little or no protection (pp. 104-105).

- One in five teens believe oral sex is “safe sex” (p. 144).

- In June 2002 a 13-year-old sixth-grade girl who made good grades and led the cheerleading squad was strangled to death by a married man—one of many sexual partners

she had met on the Internet (p. 163).

Dr. Meeker illustrates the magnitude of the problem this way: “Picture a football stadium filled with teenagers. Start counting. One out of five of those cheering kids has herpes (at least, that we know of). Every third girl in the stands has HPV [human papilloma virus, which can cause cancer], and one out of ten has chlamydia. If we pulled all the healthy kids out of there, leaving just those teens infected with an STD, the stadium would still be nearly full” (pp. 13-14).

Shocking? Perhaps, but backed by solid medical research—research that is not based on high-risk, inner-city kids. We are talking about the kid next door, the captain of the basketball team and perhaps your very own children whom you love and cherish. Bad things happen to “good” kids when they engage in irresponsible sexual behavior.



Dr. Meeker attributes this epidemic of sexually transmissible diseases to four things: birth control pills, condoms, popular media and high-risk sex. This is certainly not a politically correct position for a physician—or anyone—to take, but the facts speak for themselves.

### Easy birth control changes everything

Dr. Meeker—herself the mother of four, including two teens—has not always taken this stand. Early in her career she was a proponent of birth control and held feminist ideals. She wanted girls to like being women and to make their own sexual decisions—to have control of their bodies. She prescribed oral contraceptives to “wage war” on unwanted pregnancies. But after years of experience she has concluded that this is not the right approach. *Birth control does not equate to disease control.*

“Twenty years ago, I wouldn’t have hesitated to prescribe oral contraceptives to teenage girls . . . As a young doctor swept away by the message of ‘safe’ sex, I didn’t know any better” (p. 98). But today, she thinks long and hard about prescribing birth control pills—for while they protect against unwanted pregnancy, they inadvertently *encourage* increased sexual activity and the danger of picking up a sexually transmitted disease.

The advent of oral contraceptives brought new choices and so-called freedoms—the freedom to choose to engage in sexual activity without the unwanted responsibility of children. This freedom, as we all know, sparked a social revolution that reshaped popular notions about sexuality and family.

“When birth control pills arrived in the 1960s, our generation felt we had just what we needed to take ultimate charge of our sexual lives and our decisions about reproduction,” Dr. Meeker writes. “But what we failed to see was the curse that accompanied it . . . Only now are we coming to realize that

safe sex isn’t safe. In fact, it can be deadly” (pp. 89-90).

Stated another way, we thought we could have sexual promiscuity without the undesirable results. What we discovered was promiscuity produced far more than unwanted pregnancies—sexually transmitted diseases exploded. What was needed now was protection from the other consequences of sexual freedom, some of them quite deadly.

### The not-so-magic solution

Enter the condom. The latex condom became the darling of the healthcare community and the proponents of safe sex. Millions of condoms are distributed to teens in schools each year. Sex education classes teach our teens how to use them to have sex safely. The message that is sent either overtly or implicitly is that sex is safe as long as you wear a condom. The problem? *Neither the condom nor sex education works as advertised.*

Consider these findings: “Less than half of adolescent boys (45%) say they use condoms for every act of intercourse, and older teens (age 18 and 19) actually use condoms *less* than younger teens (age 15 to 17). Remember, these are the same kids who forget to do their homework, brush their teeth, or take the dog out. Can we really expect them to use condoms each and every time they have sex?” (p. 116).

This illustrates an important point: Just because someone is educated does not mean that the knowledge will be applied—especially in something as impulsive and emotionally charged as sex. Isn’t the idea that sex education will result in teens following through and actually using protection dangerously naive?

Furthermore, as sex education fails to deliver the advertised results, so does the condom. Condoms do not always protect. They leak or break at least two percent of the time

and do not offer adequate protection against many sexually transmitted diseases.

Human papilloma virus (HPV), for example, is spreading like wildfire and is a leading cause of cervical cancer in young women. Yet the latest studies conclude that “condoms have *no impact* on the risk of sexual transmission of human papilloma virus in women” (p. 108). Another study published in 2001 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that when a man’s sexual partner has herpes, “using condoms didn’t help the men reduce their risk of getting the disease at all” (p. 109).

Teaching teens to use condoms and making them readily available gives teens a false sense of security that inadvertently exposes them to greater risk. They are receiving a fallacious message that sex is safe when, in fact, solid medical research shows it isn’t.

This incongruity points to a bigger problem: “As long as the idea of sexual freedom remains the driving force behind national sex education, the STD epidemic will continue . . . The only way to stop it is to curb the conspiracy of those who urge total sexual freedom and argue that it has no costs and causes no harm” (p. 28).

### High-risk sex

Dr. Meeker also attributes the epidemic level of STDs among teens to their involvement in high-risk sex. They tend to act on the messages they receive from school and the media to engage in sexual activity that most teens several decades ago knew nothing about.

These high-risk activities include the increased popularity of oral sex. Teens feel a false sense of security because oral sex cannot cause pregnancy and they believe it to be safe. While oral sex does not result in pregnancy, the idea that it is safe is not true.

Says Dr. Meeker: “You can mince words all you like, but while oral sex may leave you a

## How Mass Media Sells Sex

The idea of sexual freedom is kept alive and well by what Dr. Meg Meeker considers a major cause of the current epidemic of teen sex—mass media and the sexually charged world our kids see: “The American Psychological Association estimates that teenagers are exposed to 14,000 sexual references and innuendoes a year on television alone—all subtly (or not so subtly) influencing my patients into having sex, an act that can physically and mentally harm, if not kill them” (*Epidemic: How Teen Sex Is Killing Our Kids*, 2002, p. 120).

What messages are they sent through movies and television? “Consider the impressions they’re likely to take away from a film such as *Titanic*,” writes Dr. Meeker. “Do kids even remember the movie is based on a true historical event? Do they remember the old couple who held each other as the ship sank so they could die in each other’s arms? The captain who shut himself in his cabin to go down with his ship? Of course not. Kids remember the steamy windows of the car parked below-deck



in which Jack and Rose made passionate love. Did she get pregnant? Herpes? Chlamydia? No. She got the ‘strength’ from this three-day tryst to ‘go on’” (p. 124).

Television and movies are only part of what our kids see and are exposed to. Increasingly, fashion designers and mass merchandisers are using sex to sell to our kids.

The pressure is intense at a time when our kids are vulnerable. According to *The Harvard Guide to Modern Psychiatry*: “Sexual impulses, intensified during puberty, remain intense during this phase of adolescence. Permissiveness, the lack of moral guidelines, the sexually stimulating aspects of mass media, and other dimensions of today’s society make control of these impulses particularly difficult for the modern adolescent” (Armand Nicholi, Ed., 1999, p. 617).

Sadly, what the media portrays as fun or fashionable—to sell merchandise—often induces behavior that leads to debilitating diseases, even death.

technical virgin, it won't leave you disease-free . . . The sad truth is that HIV *is* spread through oral sex, as are herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, HPV, chancroid, intestinal parasites, and hepatitis A" (p. 147).

Particularly troubling is this observation based on many interviews with teachers and high school counselors: "Group sex is most popular with younger teens (particularly at the eighth-grade level)" (p. 156). How utterly society has failed when such activity is popular among those so young! Making matters even worse is the level of exposure to disease. Research shows that the earlier teens engage in sexual activity, the more partners they are likely to have—and hence the greater likelihood of contracting one or more diseases.

Most teens are blissfully unaware of the danger. If they think of risk at all, they believe their exposure is limited to their direct partners. *But that is not true.* In reality *they have been exposed to everyone who ever had sexual contact with their promiscuous partners.*

Let's say that a teen has sexual contact with seven partners, which is a number not unusual for teens engaged in such activities. This means that he or she has statistically been exposed to 127 other teens—not just the seven *immediate* partners, but also all of *their* partners, plus *their* partners, ad nauseum—a frightening proposition. Promiscuity is not fun and games—it's highly risky and potentially deadly.

### Must-read books for parents

Dr. Meeker's well-researched book *Epidemic* is a must-read for all concerned parents, but so is another best seller that reaches similar conclusions—the Holy Bible. Millennia ago one of its writers—famous for his wisdom and observations of human behavior—wrote words that echo Dr. Meeker's sentiments.

"For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple . . . a young man devoid of understanding." The writer describes how the young man meets a young woman and the predictable action and reaction follows. ". . . She caught him and kissed him . . . 'Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love.' . . . Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter . . . As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would take his life" (Proverbs 7:6-23).

The Bible denounces sexual promiscuity and warns of the terrible consequences of the kinds described by Dr. Meeker. But it also offers a great deal of hope and encouragement to parents committed to follow its instructions.

The incessant bombardment of popular media notwithstanding, research consistently

confirms that parents—even poor ones—still are the *primary* influence in their children's lives. Concerned parents should draw encouragement from these findings, because they show that we are not powerless against the negative pressures our children face.

### So what are parents to do?

We must take positive action and stand as advocates for our children. This task is not as daunting as it may seem, because we can avail ourselves of the power and principles of the God of the universe—the Author and Creator

the fact that it won't happen *universally* should not discourage us from administering those laws *individually*.

The great principles of the Bible are most effective when administered from one heart to another in the context of our family relationships. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 speaks to this concept: ". . . 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."



**"Touch lets teenagers know that someone likes them. So when a parent—still the most important person in a teen's life—touches them, it affects them deeply."**

of all things, including family and children. Children are a gift from God, the Bible tells us (Psalm 127:3-5)—and as such we can be sure that we have His attentive interest.

The first commandment that God gave man was "be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth"—defining sex as a good thing, integral to accomplishing His divine plan (Genesis 1:28). Family and children have been central to God's purpose from the very beginning. Hence, it should not come as a surprise that the forces of evil consistently wage war against this time-honored institution.

When God codified His moral principles into what is known as the Ten Commandments, He included powerful antidotes for the current epidemic. Consider the impact should a full dose of "Thou shalt not commit adultery" be injected into every man, woman and teen in our societies. The application of just this one of God's moral principles would bring the epidemic to a screeching halt! And although that will never happen in our world,

The content of this passage demonstrates the depths of wisdom in the Holy Scriptures. Articulated in just this one passage is a set of tools that equip committed parents to build a strong defense against the negative culture of our dying world. Ironically, but not surprisingly, these tools are consistent with modern research in family and sexual dynamics.

### Commitment from the heart

God's "words," this passage tells us, must be in our "heart"—not a set of rules for teens taped to the refrigerator door. There is no room for hypocrisy, double standards or knee-jerk actions. Parents who are committed to consistent principles that they believe in their heart of hearts usually will foster respect, not contention, from their teens.

Commitment to the principles found in this passage provides a solid basis for positive action, because they produce conviction that taps the power of the Almighty God. There is no need to be timid. You can move forward

with confidence, knowing that you are on solid ground. Nowhere can your dedication to the consistent moral principle of these “words” have greater influence than in your children’s attitude about sex. As Dr. Meeker puts it, “What’s really important *isn’t what you say, but what you believe*” (p. 215).

What you believe in your heart of hearts is what you will ultimately transfer to your kids—good, bad or indifferent. A good friend of mine, old enough to be my grandfather, once told me: “Don’t wonder how your children will turn out. They will become as you are”—a sobering, but constructive, admonition from the voice of experience.

### Instruction must start with yourself

Notice that this transfer of values is to take place “when you sit in your house.” It is something that is “talked” about in this setting. Does this describe the typical scenario in a 21st-century household? Hardly. Dad and Mom are often away at work most of the time or otherwise uninvolved with their children. The kids are glued to a television or computer screen in their own rooms, or listening to music with their headsets on. No wonder the mass media has such a powerful influence.

Many believe there is simply no time for family in our hectic world. This is just not true. Simply reducing the amount of television or movie time by half would *quadruple* the amount of time for family in most cases.

How is this done? The sense of this passage is that it occurs in a natural and practical way. And remember the teaching must come *from the heart*, which means parental behavior and habits must change first, not the other way around.

Reducing your teen’s television or other media time without first going on a media diet yourself will not bring results. Says Dr. Meeker: “Parents who warn their children that teen sex isn’t good but spend a lot of time watching highly sexualized television or movies are muddying the waters . . . If a kid sees his parent ‘approving’ of sex between young sophisticated singles on television, why shouldn’t he be one of those young sophisticated singles?” (p. 220).

Changing *your* media diet first makes a powerful statement. It will create a natural environment where you can talk about these things in a family setting.

How? Teens are naturally curious. And when they see you change, they will often ask—giving you the opportunity to talk. Tell them *why* you have changed. Silence, especially on moral issues such as sexual activity, creates a vacuum that will be filled with undesirable behavior. Once your behavior is consistent with the moral principles of the Bible,

then you have an obligation to set guidelines on the type of media that is allowed “when you sit in your house.”

This consistency is important, notes Dr. Meeker: “. . . Don’t, as an alternative, offer to sit and watch restricted movies with your child. Regardless of what is said afterward, the simple act of watching it will sanction the movie and its content in your teen’s mind” (p. 141).

### Applying God’s instruction practically

According to this passage in Deuteronomy 6, another practical time for teaching is “when you walk by the way.” This has particular potential in our modern world where we seem to be running to and fro most of the time—especially when we have teens.

There are the trips to ball games, the dance studio, the piano lessons and the list goes on. Use these opportunities to talk about what is in your heart. Of course, talking about what is in our heart is what usually happens anyway—the problem sometimes is that either there is nothing in our heart or it is filled with negative things.

The inside of a car can be a tremendous classroom. Turn down or turn off the radio sometimes and let the heart speak. “If teenagers think you like them, they will communicate with you. If they think you dislike them, they will shut you out” (p. 197). This time is familial, practical and you may have just found hours each week that you did not know you had.

The beauty about God’s instruction in Deuteronomy to teach our children is that it occurs at natural intersections where our busy lives cross. Instead of worrying about creating “quality time” to do family things, which often ends up either not happening anyway or feeling unnatural, choose to stop and greet each other at these intersections when your busy lives cross paths—when you sit in your house, when you travel and when you lie down.

Bedtime is another opportunity. Spend time. Pray together and give them a goodnight hug. Dr. Meeker notes that “touch lets teenagers know that someone sees them, someone likes them. So when a parent—still the most important person in a teen’s life—touches them, it affects them deeply” (p. 202).

If this has not been your practice or tradition, it may seem awkward at first. But be consistent, patient and natural. You are filling a great need; your teen will respond in time if your actions are heartfelt.

The morning, “when you rise up,” is no less important. A heartfelt “Good morning!” with praise and affection goes a long way. “It’s really not so hard for parents to communicate

self-respect to teens,” writes Dr. Meeker. “They want positive messages—about themselves, about life, and about sex.” Teens, especially girls, “want someone to tell them that their bodies are beautiful, so beautiful in fact that they should keep them protected and covered” (p. 214).

This is a need parents should take pains to fill—because if you do not, someone else will. The comment “Good morning, beautiful” is not trite when well-placed and heartfelt.

Admittedly, mornings can be challenging, but the intersection is there. Look for opportunities. I know some parents who drop their teens at school in the morning expressly to create another opportunity to “walk by the way.” Few young teens will pass up the opportunity to avoid the dreaded bus ride—and just consider the change of influence.

If schedules simply do not coincide, leave a note with a snack and juice to let them know you care. Teens in particular have an uncanny ability to know whether you really don’t have time, or if you just don’t want to make time. The former is acceptable; the latter is not.

### Why not make a start today?

The challenges for families with teens are great. The risks of the epidemic described in Dr. Meeker’s book are real and the medical challenges are complex, but we are not powerless in facing them. There is much that you can accomplish if you determine to take such positive steps.

Simply applying these principles with consistency and patience will go a long way in containing the current crisis for your children, but there is a lot more. The Bible—the consistent international best-seller—is a source we should regularly read and cherish for its many timeless principles designed to help us enjoy happy, healthy and productive lives and pass on the same to our children. **GN**

## Recommended Reading

The publishers of *The Good News* offer many resources for helping parents understand and apply biblical principles. When it comes to applying God’s commandments and teaching their value to our children, we strongly recommend our free booklets *The Ten Commandments* and *Making Life Work*. For an overview of the Bible’s fundamental teachings, we recommend our 12-lesson *Bible Study Course*, also free. And be sure to read the article “Virginity: Is It Worth It?,” beginning on page 30. As this article reports, there is encouraging news that more teens are saying *no* to premarital sex.



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[www.gnmagazine.org](http://www.gnmagazine.org)

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### Arkansas

Mena ch. 19, Sundays 2 & 2:30 p.m.

### Arizona

Phoenix ch. 24, 98, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

Prescott ch. 13, Tuesdays 1 p.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.

Prescott Valley ch. 13, Sundays 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.; Mondays 9 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. & 6 p.m.

### California

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Fremont ch. 6, Mondays 11:30 a.m.

Lafayette ch. 3, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.

Livermore ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.

Marin County ch. 26, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.

Newark ch. 3, Mondays 11:30 a.m.

Novato ch. 71, Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.

Orange County ch. 3A, 6, Sundays 11 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 3 p.m. & 9 p.m.

Richmond ch. 26, Mondays 10 a.m.

San Francisco ch. 24, Sundays 3:30 p.m.

San Jose ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.

Santa Rosa ch. 72, Sundays 6 p.m.; Thursdays 8 p.m.

S. Pasadena ch. 6, Thursdays 4 p.m.

Walnut Creek ch. 6, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.

### Colorado

Boulder ch. 43, Fridays 1 p.m.

Denver ch. 28, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.

### Hawaii

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### Illinois

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Naperville ch. 17, Sundays 10 a.m.

Romeoville ch. 6, Sundays 8 a.m., 2 p.m. & 8 p.m.

### Indiana

Bloomington ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.

Ft. Wayne ch. 57, Sundays 12:30 p.m.

### Iowa

Iowa City ch. 18, Tuesdays 12:30 p.m.; Fridays 5:30 p.m.

### Kentucky

Hopkinsville ch. 23, Thursdays 12 noon; Saturdays 10 a.m.

Paducah ch. 2, Tuesdays 3:30 p.m.

### Massachusetts

Cambridge ch. 22, Sundays 10 a.m.

Shrewsbury ch. 33, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 7 a.m.

### Michigan

Ann Arbor ch. 17, Thursdays 4 p.m.

Grand Rapids ch. 25, Tuesdays or Wednesdays 11 a.m.

Midland ch. 3, 2nd & 4th Thursdays 12:30 p.m.

### Minnesota

Austin ch. 6, Fridays 4:30 p.m.

Rochester ch. 10, Mondays, Thursdays 8:30 p.m.

Willmar ch. 18, Wednesdays 9:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

### Missouri

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### North Carolina

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Greensboro ch. 8, Sundays 12 noon

Thursdays 12 noon; Fridays 8 p.m.

### West Virginia

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### Wisconsin

Beloit ch. 12, Thursdays 6:30 p.m.

Brodhead ch. 10, Saturdays, Sundays 9 a.m.; Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 10:30 p.m.

Eau Claire ch. 11, Sundays 2:30 p.m.

Madison ch. 4, Sundays 10:30 p.m.

Stevens Point ch. 3, Mondays 10:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 10 a.m., 3:30 p.m.



### North Dakota

Fargo ch. 2, Saturdays 4:30 p.m.

### New Mexico

Albuquerque ch. 27, Saturdays 2 p.m.

### Ohio

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Enon ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

Fairborn ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

Trotwood ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

Vandalia ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

Xenia ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

### Oregon

Canby ch. 5, Mondays 9 a.m.; Tuesdays 5 p.m.

Eugene ch. 11, Mondays 6 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 a.m.; Thursdays 12 midnight; Fridays 12 noon

Oregon City ch. 21, Mondays 8 p.m.

Portland ch. 21, Sundays 9 p.m.; Fridays 9 p.m.

ch. 11, Mondays 8 p.m.

Salem ch. 23, Sundays 9 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.; Thursdays 12 noon

### Tennessee

LaFollette ch. 12, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

### Texas

Austin ch. 11, Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.; Thursdays 6:30 p.m.

### Washington

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Olympia ch. 22, Tuesdays 4 p.m.

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Sierra Vista 1470 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.

Tucson 940 AM, Saturdays 10:30 a.m.

### California

San Diego 760 AM, Sundays 6 a.m.

### Indiana

Indianapolis 1070 AM, Sundays 7 a.m.

### Iowa

Waterloo 1540 AM, Tuesdays, Wednesdays 9 p.m.

### Louisiana

New Orleans 870 AM, Saturdays 9:30 p.m.

### Missouri

Kansas City 710 AM, Sundays 9 a.m.

### New York

Buffalo 930 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.

Syracuse 570 AM, Saturdays 10 p.m.

### Ohio

Cincinnati 550 AM, Sundays 6:30 a.m.

### Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh 1410 AM, Sundays 7 a.m.

### Tennessee

Memphis 600 AM, Sundays 9 a.m.

### West Virginia

Wheeling 1170 AM, Mondays 12:30 a.m.

# Making Sense of a Fragmenting World

Terrorist alerts . . . the “axis of evil” . . . shifting geopolitical alliances. How can we make sense of it all?

by Gary Petty

**C**apitol Hill politics, U.S. relationships with Great Britain, France and Germany, radical Islam—the world seems more and more complicated. How can we make sense of it all, especially in the age of sound bites and television images that leave indelible impressions but give little or no historical or cultural context?

When examining the global community of the 21st century, it's apparent that two conflicting forces are in motion. One is the movement to unite the world into a global economy. The success of the interdependence of international corporations is evidenced here in the United States where labels that say “Made in China” or “Made in Japan” no longer shock us. We drive cars assembled in Mexico and wear clothing stitched in an Indonesian sweatshop. This is true in many other developed countries.

We're accustomed to images of poor children in Africa wearing athletic shoes with an American brand name, drinking Coca-Cola while toting a Russian-made AK-47. The power of companies to cross international boundaries was evidenced in that immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, MTV made inroads into new television markets in Eastern Europe.

Advocates of the global economy promote the concept that the quickest way to defeat socialism is to introduce its adherents to the glitter of packaged consumerism. The result is that U.S. fast-food chains see communist China as a giant mass of consumers ripe for an introduction to hamburgers and fries.

Others are more critical, seeing this global economy as an agency of a glib, shallow culture, promoting immediate if-it-itches-scratch-it consumerism promoted by creating brand names recognizable in Canada, Belgium, Japan, Egypt and everywhere in between.

In the view of those who promote the new world economy, megacorporations transcend national boundaries with an endless variety of products. Nations are seen as collections of customers—all the marketers have to do is

devise the right advertising campaign for that specific market. If the consumer doesn't have a need for a particular product, advertising can create the illusion of a need. Actors in white smocks tell us what three out of four doctors, beer drinkers or housewives prefer, and that fabric softeners really can be “new and improved” every six months.

## We're accustomed to images of poor children in Africa wearing athletic shoes with an American brand name, drinking Coca-Cola while toting a Russian-made AK-47.

The forces of global economy are in a head-on collision with the forces of those who want to preserve a local culture, nationalism or religion. Islamic fundamentalist men in Saudi Arabia might want to drink Pepsi and watch American-made movies, but they don't want their wives and daughters listening to Madonna or wearing the see-almost-everything fashions of Britney Spears.

As Benjamin Barber points out in his book *Jihad vs. McWorld*, these two forces, global economy and the human need for historical, religious and cultural identity, collide into a symbiotic paranoia. The isolationist Islamic fundamentalist in Saudi Arabia relies on the global economy to sell the oil that allows him to buy a Mercedes made in Germany. Of course, the German in Stuttgart needs the oil from Saudi Arabia to run his Japanese Toyota which was manufactured in Britain.

### Unity and disunity

The world is both fragmenting and uniting at the same time. NATO, which has ensured the unity of the Western world for decades, is in trouble. Leaders in France and Germany are frustrated with the lack of unity in the European Union and are threatening to create a new alliance of nations. The former Soviet Union has fragmented into new countries along ethnic and cultural lines.

People want to be more than consumers, more than a collection of marketing data.

At the heart of the conflict are two human needs. One is the need to belong to a family, a community, to experience meaningful relationships with others who share similar values.

One powerful factor in global communication is the Internet. People can communicate across national boundaries, oceans and ideologies with the click of a mouse. But does

it create a sense of community among those who relate to each other in a chat room?

Consider the troubling case of Brandon Veda, 21. He became another suicide statistic, but what made his death alarmingly different was that when his parents turned on his computer they found that Brandon's overdose of drugs and alcohol was watched by chat room acquaintances. Hidden behind the anonymous veil of code names and the virtual reality of cyberspace, people watched, some even encouraged, this young man to take his life.

No matter how much money, possessions or status a person acquires, these things can't answer the basic human need to be valued as a person. To be emotionally and spiritually healthy, a human being needs stable relationships with other people.

A second human need is that information, to make sense, must fit into a meaningful context. Palestinian teenagers are willing to die as human bombs because the only context they've known is a misguided view of the religious and political history of the land where they were born. They wish to protect what they see as their religious beliefs and families. In the context of their microscopic world, walking into a nightclub and blowing Israeli teenagers to bits (along with themselves) seems sensible.

### In search of a world context

What this world needs are universal

*Continued on page 27*



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# Was Noah's Flood Universal?

Was the Flood of Genesis universal, covering all the earth? Or was it merely a regional inundation engulfing only a small area? This question has troubled many readers of the Genesis story. How can we discover the truth?

by **Arnold Mendez**

For many, the theory of evolution is the foundational underpinning for the geological and biological sciences. Since evolution is so widely accepted in much of the academic community, many believe that the geological record can only be interpreted using evolutionary guidelines.

These widely accepted guidelines supposedly show that the present is the key to the past. According to this concept (often called uniformitarianism), since there are no worldwide or global floods occurring now, there have been none in the past.

Misled or confused by the scientific community, many readers of Genesis have given in to the concept of a regional or local flood. The Bible, however, is very clear about the magnitude and scope of Noah's Flood. The biblical story, both in Old and New Testaments, firmly tells us that planet Earth was indeed covered by a universal flood. (For background information concerning what really lies behind many scientists' belief in evolution and its effect on their view of the Bible, request your free copies of *Creation or Evolution: Does it Really Matter What You Believe?* and *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*)

## Biblical facts about Noah's Flood

The Bible says the deluge began in the

600th year of Noah's life. How long did it last? Many believe that the Flood merely lasted the 40 days and 40 nights of rain followed by a short drying period, after which the earth was ready for Noah and the animals.

They fail to realize how long the whole Flood episode lasted. The Noachian deluge lasted for *more than a year* (compare Genesis 7:11 and 8:14-15). During this time the earth was covered by water for 150 days—*five months*. The Bible clearly states that “the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days” (Genesis 7:24; 8:3-4).

How deep and how widespread was the water? Scripture indicates that the tops of all the mountains all around the world were covered to a depth of 15 cubits (Genesis 7:20)—about 20 to 30 feet depending on the size of cubit that was used. Even assuming that the antediluvian mountains may not have been as high as some mountains are today, this still represents an enormous amount of water (see Psalm 104:5-9).

Another indication of the hydrological forces involved may be gathered from the following verse: “. . . I will destroy them [along] with *the earth*” (Genesis 6:13, emphasis added throughout). The earth would also be destroyed along with wicked humanity. This could well indicate a massive reshaping of global topography.

This statement is repeated at the conclusion of Noah's Flood: “. . . Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to *destroy the earth*” (Genesis 9:11).

The Flood of Noah's time was an earth-wrecking experience. The shape of the landforms after the Flood may have been quite different from the earth that existed before the deluge. Some recent geological formations stand as natural witnesses to the destructive force of these raging waters (see “Evidence of a Worldwide Flood”).

The very need for the ark is a strong indication of the magnitude of the Flood. If the Flood were only a local or regional event, it would have been a simple matter for Noah to move somewhere else. There would have been no need for the gathering of all the animals and Noah's family into the ark.

The Bible reveals that this deluge was of such a magnitude that provisions were made to assure the survival of both humanity and the animals. The whole point of building the ark would have been meaningless if the Flood were simply regional or local.

## Peter's perspective

The New Testament shows that its inspired writers considered a worldwide flood a real historic event. The apostle

## Evidence of a Worldwide Flood

For much of the 20th century the majority of the scientific community has denied the possibility of a universal flood. Yet more evidence is accumulating that there indeed was a worldwide flood several thousand years ago.

One of the most fascinating scientific discoveries in recent times regarding a universal flood came from some scientists who were not searching for any evidence of the Flood. It came from oceanographers in the Gulf of Mexico who were doing some rather routine research on coral and sediments of the ocean floor.

Their two oceanographic vessels had pulled from the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico several long, slender core samples of the sediment, which includes the fossil shells of one-celled plankton called foraminifera. While still alive, these organisms lock into their shells a chemical record of the temperature and salinity of the water. When they reproduce, the shells fall away and drop to the bottom. A cross-section of that ocean bed carries a record of climates that the oceanographers say go back more than 100 million years.

The cores were analyzed in two different investigations—by Cesar Emiliani of the



*Fresh water, indicated by light blue-green, flows from the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico in this photograph from space.*

Peter wrote: “For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the *world that then existed perished*, being flooded with water” (2 Peter 3:5-6).

In this passage the apostle Peter affirms the reality of a global flood. Interestingly, he states that even during his time some people had willfully forgotten this obvious truth. How much more so in our skeptical world today?

The overall content of 2 Peter 3 also bears witness to the Flood’s universality. In this prophetic chapter Peter also refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ (an event of worldwide importance in its scope, Matthew 24:30-32) and a future global cataclysm that will envelop the earth in fire. Clearly Peter’s basic perspective here is universal—not regional or local.

Jesus Christ also understood the Flood from the same global perspective. He used the Flood as an example in His teaching to illustrate an important spiritual lesson: “. . . As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man . . . until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:26-27).

We see that the Bible repeatedly uses universal terminology to describe the dimensions and devastation of the Flood. The eighth-century-B.C. Hebrew prophet Isaiah also bore witness to a universal deluge. He quoted our Creator as saying: “For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you” (Isaiah 54:9).

Consider that there have been many local floods in the world since Noah’s time. That being so, if the Flood of his day was

## Was There Enough Water?

Some critics of a universal flood have claimed that sufficient water simply wasn’t available to cover the mountains as the Bible describes. “And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered” (Genesis 7:19).

Scripture records that the “windows of heaven” were opened and it rained for 40 days and 40 nights (Genesis 7:4, 11). In addition, “all the fountains of the great deep were broken up” (verse 11). This appears to refer to subterranean aquifers, which were emptied—perhaps by tectonic upthrusting. Clearly enormous amounts of water became available rather suddenly.

One point about this objection is that it assumes the topography of the earth today is just as it appeared in Noah’s time. This apparently is not so. Genesis 1:9 states that the waters of the earth (seas and oceans) were gathered in one place. Today the landmasses of the earth are scattered about its surface and all the seas are definitely not in one place. It may be that the current topography of our planet is at least partially the result of the tremendous geologic upheaval of a universal Flood.

A fascinating news item that received little attention appeared on the *Nature* magazine Web site March 8 ([www.nature.com/nsu/020304/020304-10.html](http://www.nature.com/nsu/020304/020304-10.html)). “Geologists have divined water where you might least expect it: 1,000 kilometres below the Earth’s surface,” stated the report. “Here, rocks heated to over 1,000°C and squeezed under high pressures may harbour around *five times as much water as in all the world’s oceans*” (emphasis added). It explained that a team of Japanese geologists had concluded that this enormous amount of water was locked up in the superheated, superpressurized molten minerals surrounding the earth’s iron-rich core.

The conclusion that such an enormous amount of water exists trapped within the earth raises some intriguing possibilities in light of the Bible’s statement that “the fountains of the great deep were broken up.”

merely local in scope too, then God would have lied in allowing more of them to happen. So if we accept the Bible and God’s promises in it, then we must conclude that the Flood of Noah’s day was not merely a local event. It was a universal flood, the likes of which have never been seen again—just as God promised.

### Faith and Noah’s Flood

Of course, a Christian’s belief in the Bible is always supported by the element of faith in God and in the truthfulness of His Word. Even the Flood of Noah is mentioned in the context of godly faith.

“By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of righteousness

which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7). The patriarch Noah was one of “the elders [who] obtained a good testimony” by means of his faith and patience (verse 2).

Although one’s belief in the inspiration of the Bible is clearly undergirded by rationality, common sense and even archaeological finds and historical records that often substantiate biblical events—ultimately it rests on faith that the Bible is both inspired by God and true.

“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (verse 1, New International Version). Without faith we have no hope. As verse 6 tells us, “. . . Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” **GN**

University of Miami, and by James Kennett of the University of Rhode Island and Nicholas Shack of Cambridge University. Both analyses pointed to a dramatic drop in the salinity of the water, providing compelling evidence of a vast flood of fresh water into the Gulf of Mexico thousands of years ago.

Cesar Emiliani explains the results: “A huge amount of ice-melt water rushed into the Gulf of Mexico and produced a sea-level rise that spread around the world with the speed of a tidal wave.” He adds, “We know this because the oxygen isotope ratios of the foraminifera shells show a marked temporary decrease in the salinity of the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. It clearly shows that there was a major period of flooding from 12,000 to 10,000 years ago, with a peak about 11,600 years ago. There is no question that there was a flood and there is also no question that it was a universal flood” (“Noah, the Flood, the Facts,” *Reader’s Digest*, U.S. edition, September 1977, p. 133).

It is also worth mentioning that the radiocarbon dating used to establish the number of years is imprecise after 4,000 years, so the time of this universal deluge could be closer to the 4,300 years described in the Bible as the time of the biblical Flood.

Another recent discovery that could have a relation to the inundation of the Gulf of Mexico is the finding by geologists William Ryan and Walter Pitman of the sudden

flooding of the Black Sea basin around 6,000 to 7,000 years ago (according to their dating). “The salt water,” says *Smithsonian* magazine, “poured through the deepening channel, creating a waterfall 200 times the volume of Niagara Falls. In a single day enough water came through the channel to cover Manhattan to a depth two times the height of the [former] World Trade Center, and the roar of the cascading water would have been audible at least 100 miles away” (“Evidence for a Flood,” April 2000, electronic version).

An additional evidence of the Deluge being global and not local is the literally thousands of flood stories from around the world. One enterprising historian, Dr. Aaron Smith of the University of Greensboro, North Carolina, became obsessed with classifying all the flood accounts. “As a result of years of labor, he has collected a complete history of the literature on Noah’s Ark. There are 80,000 works in seventy-two languages about the Flood, of which 70,000 mention the legendary wreckage of the Ark” (Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, 1980, p. 38).

It is hard to believe that if the Flood were only a local event, there would be 80,000 different accounts of it from around the world that describe it as universal in scope.

—Mario Seigle

# Noah's Ark: Was It Possible?

Atheists, agnostics, unbelievers and liberal scholars have all scoffed at the biblical account of Noah's ark and the Flood. But their criticisms rest on some mistaken assumptions.

by Arnold Mendez

**M**any people today are under the false assumption that Noah's ark could not possibly have carried all of its intended cargo. They believe that any such ship would have needed to be of gargantuan proportions—far exceeding the dimensions recorded in Genesis or the supposedly primitive technology of the ancient world.

Those who scoff at the Genesis story often picture the ark as a small vessel, complete with the giraffes' heads sticking out the front and the elephants' tails hanging out the back, sinking under the weight of an overloaded cargo of millions of animals. But this concept is based on several misconceptions.

Even a cursory reading of the sixth chapter of Genesis will reveal some often overlooked, but very important details. The Bible nowhere states that Noah had to take on board the ark representatives of *every* living creature. There were three requirements for the animals to be loaded on the ark. They had to be:

- Air-breathing.
- Terrestrial (land-dwelling).
- Of the same biblical *kind*.

Read this early account: "And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the *breath of life*; everything that is on the earth shall die . . . And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds *after their kind*, of animals *after their kind* . . ." (Genesis 6:17-20).

## Biblical "kind" broader than species

The word *species* and the biblical word *kind* are often used interchangeably. But this is incorrect since they are not synonymous

terms. The Genesis use of the word *kind* denotes an organism that reproduces others like itself. Since the *species* concept is much narrower, many species can be included in one single biblical "kind." The term *kind* is probably closer to the modern taxonomic classification of *genus*, and in some cases the larger taxonomic classification, *family*.

The Canidae (canine) family includes about 14 genera of dog-like animals. These include the dog, coyote, wolf, jackal, etc. The ark did not have to contain the hundreds of species of canines that make up this group. In reality, these were all represented by a few biblical "kind." These "kind" would then produce all the animals that make up the Canidae family. For example, all of the hundreds of varieties of domestic pigeons that have been produced originated from one species, apparently the wild rock pigeon (*Columbia livia*).

The ark did not need to carry every species (possibly numbering in the millions) of animal. The ark *was* designed to carry only every biblical *kind* (numbering in the few thousands) of terrestrial, air-breathing animals. (For further information, see "Understanding Biblical 'Kinds.'")

## Not all specimens on board

In reality, the majority of all animal species would *not* have been taken on board the ark. In addition to the information above, another reason is obvious: Enough representatives would have survived the Flood *without* an ark. These would have included aquatic animals such as the crustaceans (lobsters, crab, etc.), salt and freshwater fishes, echinoderms (starfish, sea urchins), mollusks, worms, corals, sponges and myriads of other specimens of animal life that does not live on dry land.

This category would even include such mammals as the whales, porpoises, seals, walrus and many others that live in aquatic environments even though they breathe air. Some reptiles and most amphibians would also fall into this category. Many other animals that are terrestrial may have also been able to survive outside the ark. These would include insects and protozoans. Many insects could have thrived on floating patches of vegetation.

God reiterates this point when He describes the kind of animals that perished during the Flood. These were specifically the type of animals that Noah was told to take on board the ark. "Every living thing that moved on the earth perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. *Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died*" (Genesis 7:21-22, New International Version, emphasis added throughout).

When a statistical approach is used, it is easy to see that the ark could have carried its intended cargo. According to John Woodmorappe (*Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study*, 1996, p. 7), the total of the animals that Noah would have needed in the ark to meet the biblical requirements would number between 2,000 and 16,000—not in the hundreds of thousands as many might suppose.

## Immense size of the ark

Another major misconception concerns the size of the ark. In reality the ark was an immense ship. Let's examine the biblical record to gain an appreciation of its dimensions. Notice what God instructed Noah: "Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. And this is how you shall

## Understanding Biblical 'Kinds'

**C**ritics have asserted that the number of animals aboard Noah's ark would have been in the tens of thousands if not more. But this assumes that biblical *kinds* are equivalent to scientific *species*. This is not necessarily the case.

Biblical *kinds* appear to be distinct breeding groups, but scientific species can often interbreed—showing that multiple interbreeding species could perhaps make up a single kind. A biblical kind can be better described as closer to a scientific *genus*. This dramatically reduces the number of animals that were required on board the ark.

It is a well-known fact that all modern dog varieties could be produced from one pair of generic dogs by the application of selective breeding principles. These would range from the diminutive Chihuahua to the imposing St. Bernard.

According to some estimates, the average-sized land animal would require only a cubic foot and a half of space. Many studies have concluded that a ship the size and design of Noah's ark would be capable of containing the required animals and still have sufficient space for needed storage and living quarters. (Adapted from *The Good News Bible Reading Program*, on the Web at [www.ugc.org/brp](http://www.ugc.org/brp).)





**The description of the ark given in the Bible reveals it to be an enormous vessel with three decks. This cutaway model by the author shows the relative scale of the ship and its inhabitants.**

make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark . . . You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks” (Genesis 6:14-16).

A cubit is approximately 18 inches (.46 meters). Most Hebrew scholars believe the cubit to have measured between 17 and 21 inches. Some estimates even put it around 25 inches. If the 18-inch cubit were used, the ark would have been 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high (137 by 23 by 14 meters). And if a larger cubit were used, the ark would of course have been proportionately larger.

Going with the smaller cubit measurement, the displacement tonnage of the ark, which is the weight of water it would displace at a draft of 15 cubits, would be almost 22,000 tons (20 million kilograms). By comparison the U.S.S. *Salem*, a 716-foot-long heavy cruiser commissioned in 1949, has a displacement tonnage of 21,500 tons.

The ark’s gross tonnage, which is a measure of cubic space (100 cubic feet being one gross ton), would have been 15,100 tons. Its total volume would have been 1,518,000 cubic feet. This would equal the capacity of 569 modern railroad stock cars. The standard size for a stock car is 44 feet long with a volume of 2,670 cubic feet. This would make a train more than five miles long.

The deck space for the ark’s three decks would total more than 101,000 square feet (9,383 square meters), or more than 21 standard college basketball courts. By comparing the measurements of the ark, it is easy to see that it would be comparable to today’s ocean-going vessels. It was probably the largest vessel of its type built until the late 1800s when metal ships were first constructed (see John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, *The Genesis*

*Flood*, 1998, p. 10).

The ark was built on a 1:6 ratio (50 cubits to 300 cubits). The science of naval architecture reveals that this is an extremely stable width-to-length ratio. Most oceangoing “hopper barges” use this same ratio in their design. It is estimated that the ark could easily have survived even the largest of ocean waves. If the ark were equipped with a dragging stone anchor, it would have been properly positioned to meet any size ocean

wave. The design of the ark would have made it almost impossible to capsize.

Apparently the ark was simply a floating bargelike craft. The Hebrew word for ark means simply *box*. It didn’t need a prow or rudder. It didn’t need any sails, oars or any other type of propulsion; it simply had to float. Since it was constructed in a boxlike configuration, the interior carrying capacity would be maximized.

### Caring for the animals

Many scoffers regarding the Genesis Flood state that it would have been impossible for the eight-person crew of the ark to have adequately cared for all the animals. This supposition is due to a common misconception, based on the theory of human and societal evolution, that ancient peoples were not advanced enough for such a seemingly massive responsibility.

Yet, while it is true that we have more of certain types of modern technology at our disposal today, the ancients were in many respects very ingenious. Consider the seven wonders of the ancient world, which included the pyramids of Egypt, the hanging gardens of Babylon and many other notable man-made works. Many of these marvels of construction have never been duplicated since.

Much time would have been saved in the care of animals if laborsaving devices had been incorporated into the design of the ark. In reality most of the animals would have required very little if any care once loaded onto the ark. With the proper technology Noah could have built self-sustaining cage and confinement systems that would have required little human attention. And even without the proper technology, Noah had God to guide him.

The ark likely made use of self-feeding, self-watering and self-cleaning technologies. Such laborsaving designs were fairly common knowledge in the ancient world.

The cages could have been equipped with a mesh-type floor and slanted waste system to move animal wastes into a gutter. Once in the gutter the waste could have been allowed to either dry (becoming odorless and inert), or be biologically composted by earthworms and bacteria, or it could have been dumped overboard by means of a slanted trough leading to the exterior. For the larger animals the stalls could have been built with slatted floors. These containment areas would have been large enough to allow the wastes to collect and become dry and inert. None of the waste would have required human handling.

Food could have been preloaded into a chute or container on the side of the cages, enabling the animals to self-feed. Enough food would have been loaded into the chutes to last for long periods of time. Extra food would have been located in overhead bins or nearby. This same technique is used today in the animal industry to increase labor efficiency. This would have greatly reduced the time needed to feed the various animals.

Water could have been piped to self-filling bowls or troughs. The water could have been gathered through a rainwater cistern system or might have been preloaded before the Flood. Ancient people commonly made indoor pipes from reeds, baked clay and bamboo tubing.

The ark *was not* a floating zoo. Animals kept in a zoo require much room, specialized food and individual attention. The ark was an *emergency vessel* built by Noah under God’s special and specific guidance. It was more in keeping with the conditions found in modern animal laboratories or mass production animal factories, which are

*Continued on page 29*

## Recommended Reading

For those who sincerely want to know the truth, there is abundant evidence that God really exists and the Bible is His Word. Be sure to download or request the free booklets *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*, *Life’s Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Is the Bible True?* To understand what faith is and its importance, request the free booklet *You Can Have Living Faith*.



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## God Values Everyone—Do We?

Helping my wife in her work with the disabled has taught both of us many lessons.

by Rex Sexton

**M**ission Possible is a Vancouver, Washington, employment agency for people with disabilities. My wife, Patricia, is the director. During the past 10 years she and her staff have placed hundreds of people with disabilities into paying jobs in the surrounding communities. They have served people who face every type of disability you could imagine. These include people with head injuries and amputations, the mobility-challenged and developmentally delayed, and those afflicted with every sort of dread disease and syndrome common today.

Recently the staff members hosted their monthly activity for disabled clients. This activity has grown in interest each month, and the attendance averages 60 with the interested parents who come along. The activities are designed to develop friendships and social skills. We often go for miniature golf, pizza and games, or bowling. The overwhelming favorite activity for this group is, believe it or not, karaoke! However, this time it was bowling.

The teens and young adults really enjoy bowling, and some are getting pretty good at it. They all understand that they're a bit different from "normal people," but they build a camaraderie as they spend time together.

### Sometimes winning is everything

As it happened, Patty and a few others were bowling on the same alley as Jake (not his real name). Jake is blind, has cerebral palsy and is confined to a wheelchair. To bowl, others help him line up his wheelchair and tell him to throw the bowling ball forward down the lane. They use the alley with special inflatable bumpers in the gutters so that there are no gutter balls. The ball often bounces from side to side as it goes down the alley. Everyone cheers, and it's great fun.

As they were playing, Jake was doing quite well. After seven frames his score was over 60 and he was leading the other four bowlers on his lane. Everyone was cheering for him and he was smiling. Patty bowled after Jake and rolled a strike (not normal for her, but with bumpers anything is possible!).

She kiddingly remarked to Jake that her score was higher than his now, hoping to



Why not look around for a way to help those in need? Many foundations and organizations that serve people with disabilities would be happy to hear from you.

challenge him a little. Instead he just dropped his head down towards the floor and said quietly, "That's the way it always is. I never win at anything." Patty felt terrible that she had inadvertently dashed his hopes. After all, it's only a game and we were just playing for fun. She could see how much winning at something might mean to him.

Everyone was hoping that Jake would win. But it didn't look good because Patty was now nine pins ahead and there were only three frames left. Patty tried her best bowling skills at missing pins so that Jake could win. Normally this comes easy, but with bumpers in the alleys it was not so simple because she had to aim for the corners.

Jake gained a few pins in the frames, but Patty bowled last and was only four behind in the 10th frame. She prayed and tried hard to miss, but knocked down three pins on the first throw. Now Jake was ahead by only one. On the next throw she was able to hit the same spot and missed the pins. Jake won by one pin, 95-94!

The other bowlers were in the low 90s also, but Jake still won. Everyone cheered for him and Jake spent the rest of the evening with a big smile on his face, shaking hands with people he couldn't see using a hand that doesn't work normally.

It was a big day in Jake's life.

**"I just want to be normal!"**

When I hear healthy, normal, blessed people complaining about how difficult their lives are, I often think of people like Jake. We have known so many of them as a result of Patty's work. In most cases their disabilities are theirs to bear through no fault of their own. They were simply born that way or were in the wrong place at the wrong time and were injured. They would trade places with a healthy person suffering from "stress" or a few financial problems in a heartbeat!

Two years ago Patty asked me to make a device to hold plastic mailing bags so that a teenage girl with severe cerebral palsy could insert three or four magazines into it and then seal the bag. Since her arms and hands don't work well, this was a challenge.

I devised a folding spring-loaded device on a cradle, sort of like a miniature seesaw, that she could push down with her elbow, move one part of the open bag under, and release so it would hold the bag open. Then with her one or two good fingers on her other hand she could push the magazines into the mailing bag. I spent about two evenings working in my garage to make it.

As she was trying it out in the office and

having difficulty, she stopped and looked at the office workers gathered around her. Tears began to flow from her eyes and she said very loudly, "I just want to be normal; I just want to be normal!"

It was more than most of us could take and not cry with her. After a couple of revisions the device worked for her, and she was able to work at her job for a few hours each day stuffing magazines into mailers.

### Remember the little ones

The percentage of people afflicted with disabilities is rapidly rising in the developing nations. For reasons that the medical profession doesn't yet understand, mental disabilities such as autism and delayed development are escalating much faster than the general population growth. Services to assist these people in need are strained to the limit.

At Mission Possible Patty regularly talks with adults and children with disabilities who have had to wait several years before receiving assistance or help from state or county agencies. Needless to say, there are limitless opportunities for volunteers to give of their time and energy to help others.

Jesus Christ foretold a time in the future when we will have to give an accounting for how we have helped those in need. "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'" (Matthew 25:34-40).

Why not look around for a way to help those in need? Many foundations and non-profit organizations that serve people with disabilities would be happy to hear from you. Special Olympics is a wonderful organization that is always appreciative to have volunteers for activities and track meets.

Remember Jake and the thousands of others like him. They are indeed some of the "little ones" Jesus instructed us to help. **GN**

## Making Sense

*Continued from page 21*

standards for how nations and individuals relate to one another—one law guaranteeing justice, fairness and mercy. Who can create and enforce universal law? The United Nations has largely failed in its promise of creating a world of cooperation.

What is needed is a world context, but what culture can supply a world view that truly will work? Will it be American, Arab, Japanese, French? Can it be developed through a religious ecumenical spirit?

Consider this: The Koran denies the divinity of Jesus as the Son of God and claims that Islam is the only true religion. The New Testament claims in no uncertain terms that to deny Jesus as the Christ and Son of God is to deny true religion. So we're faced with irreconcilable differences. This doesn't mean that Christians and Muslims can't live together in peace. It does mean, however, that unless there is a fundamental change, we will be forever divided.

There is a need for a single world community of shared values. It is the only way we will ever achieve universal peace. But it can't be accomplished by creating a one-world market of consumers vying for more and newer products. Sadly, it won't be achieved by religious ecumenism either.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write about the time when Jesus Christ will return to this earth to establish His Father's Kingdom. He records in Isaiah 2:2-4:

"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.'

"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

Our Creator will allow humanity to exhaust every avenue to create peace and harmony. When the situation becomes hopeless, and universal destruction seems imminent, Jesus Christ will return to create the peace, harmony and prosperity all desire through leading all mankind to a singular worldview—the *right* worldview. God speed that day. **GN**



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# Letters From Our Readers

## “Do Good People Really Go to Heaven When They Die?”

Because you are so wrong on theological issues, I must insist that you remove me from your mailing list. This last issue [May-June] with the quiz on the back about heaven and hell was the last straw. I not only carefully read each passage you quoted, but also the context they were written in—and you were wrong in your conclusions virtually every time. I am embarrassed that you call yourself Christians, because you are not. I will be in heaven when I die. In fact, some of your people might be too, but that will be in spite of your teaching rather than because of it.

*R.M., Wausaukee, Wisconsin*

*On the contrary, the scriptures quoted in the quiz are quite plain and speak for themselves. It's when we try to read preconceived—and nonbiblical—notions into the Scriptures that we find ourselves on biblically shaky ground.*

I just finished reading “Do Good People Really Go to Heaven When They Die?” I cannot thank you enough for this article. That question has bothered me for years. Recently a close cousin was killed in a car accident. The question was even heavier on my mind then. After reading your article, I am relieved to know that there is more later—we just have to wait on it and we “sleep” until that day comes. I have no more fear of dying. I can't put into words the weight you have lifted off of my heart. I have gone to several pastors and asked them to explain it to me in simple terms and all they would do is quote me some scripture. I left not knowing any more than when I went in. I must tell you that sometimes I had doubts about any kind of afterlife. But no more, you have saved me and now I can be assured that living a Christian lifestyle will pay off in the end. Thank you so very much!

*From the Internet*

## Anglican debate on premarital sex

“England's Anglican Church Opens Debate on Pre-Marital Sex”: This was a shocking headline I came across in one of our local dailies. Needless to say, we all know that the Anglican Church has been a source of controversy. A few years ago the same Anglicans stepped out of line when they began to consider the possibility of giving lesbians and gays positions of prominence.

The moment we make an attempt to deviate from what God demands of us, we definitely run into problems.

*J.K.K., Nigeria*

*You'll find controversy regarding the Anglican Church briefly addressed in the “World News and Trends” section on page 14, and two feature articles in this issue that explain the clear biblical teachings on premarital sex.*

## Church publications appreciated

Thank you for the subscription to *The Good News* and the booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciated reading these. I was the wife of a clergyman for 35 years until his death, but have never read and learned what I received from these commentaries. I had found a copy of *The Good News* in a beauty shop. I am enclosing a small gift.

*Mrs. C.L.T., Chicago, Illinois*

## Letters from across the world

The United Church of God is doing a marvelous work. A minister of another church said, after reading your booklets, that he could now understand passages of Scripture that he could never understand before. Another church leader said that the United Church of God is waking people up and making them think and ask questions.

*Reader, Queensland, Australia*

Currently I attend church on Saturday. I would like to try one of your churches if there is one in my local area. I know from reading your magazine that your church also keeps Saturday as the Sabbath.

*Reader, New South Wales, Australia*

Thank you for the magazine. Here in Russia I have never heard or known anything like *The Good News*. There is a big need to see world news through the biblical light. I share the magazine with my friends who can read English.

*S.N., Kazan, Tatarstan, Russia*

I'd like to renew my *Good News* subscription. I am sharing your information-packed magazine with my friends in Shanghai. Please keep up the good work.

*C.H.F., Shanghai, China*

## Seeking the right church

What an excellent magazine! Upon picking up an issue at a restaurant, I have read it from front to back. My husband and I are looking for a Bible-based church. We have been searching out churches for over a year. I am very interested in your church and learning more about it. We have subscribed to your magazine and are looking forward to receiving it. Please accept this small contribution.

*M.C., Littlestown, Pennsylvania*

Not many churches “walk” the truth of God's holy Word, so I don't run from church to church looking for the joy of the full gospel. I had never heard of the United Church of God until I just received my first copy of *The Good News*. What really amazed and overjoyed me was reading your article about Easter. The holiness, without bunnies, of the Passover observance in all of its beauty has never been done away. Please inform me of a church body nearest my address and the phone number.

*J.M.K., Lunenburg, Virginia*

I have no affiliation to any particular church, as my fervent prayers over the years are for God to direct me to a Bible-believing church. The little I have read so far indicates that my search/journey is coming to an end. I need a church which only believes in the Bible.

*O.A., Cairo, Egypt*

*We deeply appreciate our readers' interest in knowing more about the United Church of God. We encourage them to request and read our free booklets The Church Jesus Built and This Is the United Church of God.*

*To those who would like to attend a United Church of God congregation in the United States and Canada, on request we will send the telephone number of our nearest pastor. Subscribers in other areas of the world should write, telephone or E-mail our nearest office shown in the right-hand column on page 2 of every issue.*

*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 ginfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).*



# Questions & Answers

**Q: I truly love my Lord and Savior, so why do I blatantly hurt Him by deliberately sin? I just do not understand why I continue to commit certain sins.**

*P.M., California*

A: All of us must examine ourselves to make sure we have truly repented of our disobedient past way of life. If we have not, then we must make that turnaround, committing our lives to obeying God. Of course, even when we *have* repented, that does not mean we no longer contend with sin.

Our human nature involves the cumulative effect of habitual sins that we may have committed in the past as well as the profound influence of the environment around us. Additionally, that malevolent spirit Satan the devil projects his influence over every aspect of what the Bible calls “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). This adds up to a strong pull to repeat the sins and mistakes we thought we had left behind.

If we have sincerely repented, been baptized and received God’s Spirit through the laying on of hands, then God releases us from the death penalty and starts us on the road to eternal life. However, the Creator doesn’t automatically remove our human nature. So temptations to sin crop up from time to time, especially those that have dogged us in the past. Even the apostle Paul wrote of his ongoing struggles to resist sin (Romans 7:14-25).

Through regular prayer, Bible study and the power of the Holy Spirit, God will give us the needed defenses to increasingly resist those temptations. That’s why becoming converted is so important. Even so, Christians still at times yield to the temptation to sin. Because God is compassionate and fully aware of our human frailties, He readily extends His merciful forgiveness when we repent (see 1 John 1:7-9).

Having to resist sin helps us in that it contributes to building strength of character, which to God is very important. Godly character then gives us the strength to resist sin so we may, with God’s Spirit helping us, avoid the heartache, pain and suffering sin inevitably brings.

There’s much more to understand about repentance and conversion. We urge you to request and read *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. It brings together many scriptures about salvation, so that you can grow in grace and knowledge—obtaining God’s help in overcoming sin and living His way of life.

**Q: I recently received your *Good News* magazine and found it very interesting. I would like to know what denomination you are associated with so I don’t get confused about the information I am reading.**

*From the Internet*

A: The United Church of God, an Interna-

tional Association, publishes *The Good News*. However, we are not associated with any denomination of Protestantism, Orthodoxy or Catholicism. We trace our beliefs to the Church that Jesus Christ founded in the first century. Our ongoing commitment is to continually recapture and practice true biblical Christianity.

To fulfill Jesus’ command to nourish Church members spiritually (John 21:15-17), the United Church of God has congregations around the world. Believers assemble for Sabbath services to receive instructions from the Scriptures and to fellowship with others of like mind. All our congregations share the same basic, fundamental beliefs and practices.

Our ministers are available to counsel, answer questions and explain the Bible. If anyone would like to contact a minister or visit one of our congregations, please feel free to contact the United Church of God at (513) 576-9796 or at P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254-1027 or through E-mail at [info@ucg.org](mailto:info@ucg.org). If you live outside the United States, please consult the listing on page 2 for the office nearest you.

Our booklet *This Is the United Church of God* describes our history, structure, organization and teachings. *The Church Jesus Built* details the Bible’s definition of and teaching about the Church. Both booklets are freely available on request from any of our offices or from the Internet

## Noah’s Ark

*Continued from page 25*  
crowded but relatively clean environments.

### Nature of animals a factor

It is possible that many animals, which are not considered classic hibernators, have the latent ability to greatly lower their metabolic rates (Terry Vaughan, *Mammalogy*, 1986, pp. 421, 469-471). Such lowered metabolic rates can be brought on by several factors including temperature fluctuations, unavailability of food and water, variability of light and other environmental stimuli.

Many rodent and small mammals go into torpor during the course of their daily cycle. During this torpor animals do not eat, drink or produce any waste. Although the ark’s

crew could have cared for all the animals, this need would have been greatly reduced if some of the ark’s inhabitants had either hibernated or gone into torpor.

When all the facts are considered, the crew of the ark could have cared for thousands of animals. Data from animal husbandry studies have shown that a few people can care for tens of thousands of animals (John Owen, *Cattle Feeding*, 1983, p. 101; E.C. Miller and E.F. Hodges, “One Man Feeds 5,000 Cattle or 60,000 Broilers,” *1970 Yearbook of Agriculture (USA)*, p. 57).

### What made the ark possible?

God commanded the patriarch Noah to build an ark. He gave him plenty of time to accomplish the job along with specified dimensions and specific instructions.

Remember this important biblical principle: God always makes it possible for His servants to accomplish any task He has instructed them to carry out. The Creator’s objective was to save mankind; the patriarch Noah was His human instrument.

Noah carried out God’s instructions to the letter (Genesis 6:22). Like his ancestor Enoch before him, Noah had also learned to walk with his Creator (Genesis 5:22-24; 6:9). It is God’s testimony that Noah was a righteous man (Genesis 7:1). That is why our Creator remembered him and brought him and his family safely through the universal deluge (Genesis 8:1).

Noah prized obedience to God above personal popularity or anything else. That is his spiritual legacy to us down through the ages. This is the basic lesson we *all* must learn. **GN**

# Virginity: Is It Worth It?

Many people mistakenly think everyone is having sex before marriage, but the facts show otherwise—with good cause.

by Ken Treybig

**W**e live in a Nike world—a “just do it” society, to borrow the advertising slogan. This phrase has become part of everyday language for many Americans. And, in some cases, it is good advice.

For example, instead of getting overly uptight about whether a school report will be perfect and procrastinating about getting it started—*just do it*. Write the report and be finished with the project. Or instead of complaining about some chore around the house that you don’t particularly like—*just do it*. The job will be finished that much sooner, and you can go about whatever else you want to do.

But is “just do it” good advice in *all* cases? Consider the matter of sex. Much of the entertainment media in the Western world implies or plainly tells us that sex is for everyone, at any time. Movies and television shows usually depict illicit sex between unmarried people as common or expected.

The lyrics of many modern songs carry the same message. Sex sells, and the message is that having sex with anyone you love—or *think* you love—is perfectly acceptable. The idea that sex should be reserved for marriage is looked down on as an outdated notion held by religious people who are missing out on something good. The slogan seems to be “just do it” when you want and don’t worry about whether or not you are married.

If you listen to the entertainment world, you might also get the impression that *everyone* is “doing it.” After all, Hollywood producers often say they are only mimicking true life. And all too often young people fall for that lie. They can begin to feel embarrassed by not being experienced sexually—by being a virgin.

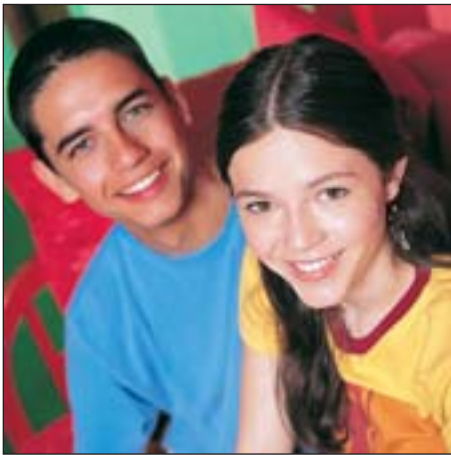
## Word meanings change

It’s funny sometimes how fluid the English language is. Words take on different connotations over time, depending on the prevailing actions and attitudes of the day.

The word *virgin* has experienced that shift. The *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* says virgin means a person who has never had sexual intercourse. It also lists many other

meanings for the word—including *pure, first, not exploited* or *not previously used*. These all have the connotation of something that is beautiful and of the highest quality. Yet society often views being a virgin in the area of sex as out of date or bad. How ironic!

If you believe in God, then you probably understand that He is the one who created human beings—and therefore also the Creator of our sexuality. Genesis 1:27 says that



**We live in fascinating and electrifying times in which young people have more free time and money than ever before. What you take into your mind is very important.**

“God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Sexuality was no surprise to God. He designed it and intended people to reproduce and populate this planet, having mastery over all its living creatures.

The next chapter gives some details of how God created a man and then created a woman from one of the man’s ribs. Thereupon God established marriage, explaining, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). As the New Testament later explains, marriage is to be honorable (Hebrews 13:4).

The rest of the book of Genesis shows it was pretty clear to most people in early ages that it was wrong for a person to have sex with someone other than his or her spouse. When

God wrote His law on stone tablets for ancient Israel, He included a statement about being sexually involved only with your spouse. It is the seventh of the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that you don’t have to carry out the actual act to commit adultery—all you have to do is look *lustfully* at someone and wish you could have sex with that person and you’ve already broken God’s commandment in spirit (Matthew 5:27). Our Western society has gone way past the looking stage in the illicit sexual activity it condones and encourages.

## Why restrict sex?

It’s very natural to ask why God gave such strict instructions about the use of sex. If He created it, surely He knows how enjoyable it can be. So why does He restrict sex to marriage? Let’s examine two passages—one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament.

Proverbs 6:32 says, “So one who commits adultery is a senseless fool: he dishonours the woman and ruins himself” (Revised English

Bible). Those are pretty strong words about the real-life consequences of sex outside of marriage.

Notice that the teaching of God has not changed in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 Paul says: “Run away from sexual sin! Any other sin which a person might do is outside his body, but if a person commits a sexual sin, he is sinning against his own body. Surely you realize that your body is a temple sanctuary? You have the Holy Spirit from God. The Holy Spirit is inside you—in the temple sanctuary. You don’t belong to yourselves. You were bought; you cost something. Use your body to give glory to God!” (Simple English Version).

Both of these passages point out that there are negative consequences for sexual sins.

These scriptures show why God gives the

instruction He does about sex. He only wants the *best* for us, and sex outside of marriage will turn out to be *bad* for us.

The next question that might arise is, "What *specifically* are those negative consequences?" The last passage quoted shows there are clearly *spiritual* consequences. God is not pleased when we misuse the wonderful gifts He has given us, and our relationship with Him will suffer. For those who want to please God and appreciate the awesome sacrifice of Jesus Christ, this alone should be plenty to make us determine we don't *ever* want to disappoint God by misusing sex.

However, there are other aspects of the negative consequences that are perhaps more visible or noticeable. In the United States, the "free love" approach began in earnest during the 1960s. What has been the fruit of some 40 years of promiscuity?

Divorces have skyrocketed to the point that there is a divorce for every two new marriages, and sexually transmissible diseases (STDs) have run rampant. The consequences of STDs range from irritation, embarrassment, sterility and lifelong pain to death, especially in the case of AIDS.

### Teens' shifting attitudes toward sex

Apparently the warning message is starting to get through to more young people today. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) released a report in September 2002 that indicates more young people are saying, "let's not" when it comes to matters of sex.

It notes that between 1991 and 2001, the number of high school students who say they have never had sexual intercourse increased by 8.5 percent. The same report shows that well over half (54.4 percent) of all high school students have never had sexual intercourse. They have rejected the "just do it" mantra and the percentage tells us there are more virgins than nonvirgins. Perhaps young people are realizing that being a virgin means there are fewer emotional heartaches as well as freedom from worry about STDs.

Sex creates a strong emotional bond—as God designed it to. If that bond is created with someone other than a spouse, the odds are extremely high that at some point it will be broken—resulting in deep emotional pain and suffering. Following God's laws will help people avoid that pain.

It's interesting that the same report says that 67 percent of high school students are not currently sexually active. That means some have had sex in the past, but are no longer sexually active. There are obviously many young people who have made mistakes in the area of sex, but have stopped. Sometimes after making a mistake in this area

people get discouraged or even depressed. It is easy for them to reason that since they cannot turn back the clock, they may as well just keep on being sexually active.

### Choosing "second virginity"

This logic is faulty because God always allows us to repent and change. If you've made a mistake, why heap on more negative consequences by continuing illicit sexual activity? It makes much more sense to *repent*—to ask God to forgive you and determine to remain sexually pure from then on until marriage when you will be able to experience the true joys of sexual love with God's richest blessings.

Some have used the term "second virginity" to describe such a situation and to encourage people who have made a mistake that it truly is worth the effort. God will forgive, so there is no reason to keep heaping on more negative consequences.

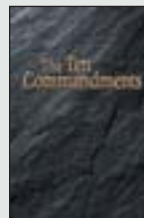
God's instructions are infinitely logical and sound. They provide *correct* information, rather than what the entertainment industry portrays. Remaining a virgin has wonderful blessings—physical, emotional and spiritual. Perhaps it's time we shifted the meaning of that word back toward something that is beautiful and of the highest quality.

Entering marriage as a virgin shows that a person has chosen to remain pure and unexploited for his or her future mate. And if someone has already made a mistake in this area, "second virginity" will bring blessings from that point forward. The past cannot be undone, but there will not be any additional negative consequences.

God definitely knows what He's talking about. Virginity *is* worth it. Don't let anyone deceive you into thinking it is not—or that "everyone" is having sex. Don't be fooled by movies or soap operas. Married people, true to their partners, are the ones who really experience the intimate joys of God's gift of sex. **GN**

### Recommended Reading

Is God out to prevent you from having any fun? Far from it! As our Creator, He designed and made us—and knows how we can enjoy happy, productive, purposeful and rewarding lives. He knows what it takes for us to enjoy the best life has to offer, and He gave us some guidelines for how to get there. You'll find them explained in our free booklets *The Ten Commandments* and *Making Life Work*. Request or download your free copies today!



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# Is the Bible True?

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check to see if this source really is true?

Discover the truth for yourself in *Is the Bible True?* It discusses these vital questions and helps you find the answers. For your free copy, visit our Web site or contact any of our offices listed on page 2.

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