

TOMORROW'S WORLD

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FORGOTTEN
LESSONS
OF HISTORY



It All Began in the Garden...

Some see the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as just that—a story without any historical basis—while others understand it as *recorded history*. How did the early Church of God understand the garden encounter with a talking serpent, recorded in the third chapter of the book of Genesis? And what, if anything, are we to learn from it? The answer to the second question has implications that go far beyond what most imagine, and is also the answer to another one of mankind's most troubling questions.

The New Testament scriptures confirm that Adam was a very real person and that the details we read about his life were also real. We see Jesus' lineage stretching all the way back to the first man, Adam (Luke 3:38). Jesus' half-brother Jude recorded that Enoch was the seventh from Adam (Jude 14). The Apostle Paul saw Adam as the first man (1 Corinthians 15:45) and affirmed that Adam was first formed, then Eve (1 Timothy 2:13).

But what of their garden encounter with a serpent that spoke to them? Is this too much to swallow? You and I have not heard a serpent speak; does this mean it did not happen? Consider this: Even today, you can find people who believe they hear voices telling them what to do. Should we dismiss their testimonies? Regardless of what we may think or believe about them, one fact is certain: The source may very well be supernatural, but—based on what they often claim is said—it is obviously never the loving God of the Bible!

The New Testament confirms the exchange between Eve and the serpent. It also explains why Adam is considered the one held accountable. "For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Timothy 2:13–14). Adam was not deceived. He knew better, but gave in to his wife!

Why is this account so important? What are we to learn from this? And what implications does it have for you personally?

The Choice That Faces Us All

Satan appealed to our first parents' emotions and desire for independence. "For God knows that in the

day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). In other words, the devil claimed that God was not telling Adam and Eve the whole truth and that they ought to be able to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong—no need to rely on God's instructions!

Notice how the devil got to Eve: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:6). These same temptations fall upon us today. That is why the Apostle John gives this warning: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.



For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh [fruit that will taste good], the lust of the eyes [fruit that is beautiful and appealing], and the pride of life [fruit that will make one wise]—is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:15–16).

What was the result of our first parents' rebellion? The tree they chose is a tree of knowledge based upon human reason *apart from God*—the fruits of which are a mixture of good and evil. In choosing that tree, they rejected the tree of life and the choice to be led by God's perfect commandments. Adam and Eve chose to determine right and wrong for themselves, and they would thereafter eat the fruits of their decisions.

The same choice faces all of us, as God explained through His prophet Moses: "I have set before you life

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and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days” (Deuteronomy 30:19–20).

A survey of world conditions reveals suffering on a scale we cannot fully take in. How can our minds wrap around genocides and wars where people are brutally hacked, bludgeoned, burned, and blown apart? Closer to home, grief overwhelms us when we see a loved one suffering the ravages of terminal illness. Many a parent has never gotten over the loss of a child from a drug overdose, a crushing vehicular accident, or a rare disease.

What It Means to Be in His Image

This brings us to the crucial question so many ask: *How can a loving God allow suffering on a worldwide scale?* This is a roadblock to belief in God that many cannot get past, but let us take a closer look. When God caught Adam and Eve in rebellion, how did they react? Adam blamed Eve, but beyond that, he blamed God. “The woman whom *You* gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 3:12). Eve then blamed the serpent.

Yes, it always seems to be someone else’s fault when the choices we make don’t work out. And let us be honest: We as human beings love determining right and wrong for ourselves. We love war, whether we fight it literally or vicariously through gore-ridden video games. We love our own “holy days,” whether the weekly day of worship that Constantine chose—Sunday—in opposition to God’s seventh-day Sabbath, or yearly holidays steeped in paganism. Humanity loves its politics, always believing that a new hero will save us from the last, now-tarnished hero. Humanity loves to eat anything that looks good, even when it brings disease and suffering. Many love pornography and every sexual perversion one can imagine, and many even cheat on their husbands or wives. Many love mind-altering drugs and getting drunk.

Is mankind ready to listen to its Creator? Clearly, no—even though the ultimate result of disobedience is terrible pain. The suffering of mankind springs from the choice to do things our way instead of God’s way.

But what is the point of it all?

The answer is found at the very beginning—the first chapter of Genesis. “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26–27). Do you understand the profound significance of that statement? It is easy to overlook, but the Bible is full of other statements that corroborate it. The truth of God’s plan for humanity ought to slap us in the face:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption [sonship]. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him [as a result of obeying God and facing hostility from this world] so that we may also be glorified with him (Romans 8:14–17, *New Revised Standard Version*).

God is creating a great family. We are not to become angels, but are to become God’s very children who will share eternity with the Father and the Son. Paul understood this and put our temporary suffering into proper context. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for *the revealing of the sons of God*” (Romans 8:18–19).

Yes, there is coming a time when “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying” (Revelation 21:4). First, though, we must learn the lesson of the garden encounter: God is the supreme Authority and it is He who determines right from wrong. It is His perfect way that produces blessings and good results. We *must* be willing to reject the wrong and choose His way.



5 The Friend You Need Most

Friendships are built on spending time together. Who is your best friend—and how can you build a closer relationship?

10 Online Sexual Harassment

Why do many children think it is okay to share inappropriate photos with friends? How can they learn proper values?

12 China, Democracy, and Christianity

As the world watches the tensions in Taiwan and Hong Kong, what can we learn from China's history of dealing with the West?

16 Forgotten Lessons of History

Are "progressive" new ideas about sex and morality really just a revival of old errors that caused prior cultures to fail?

22 Kabul and Prophecy

While many debate the causes and effects of the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan, what can Bible prophecy teach us?

26 The Blessing of Rain

25 Questions and Answers

28 NewsWatch

30 Letters to the Editor

31 Television Log

Circulation: 511,000

The Ultimate Friendship

—5—

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The Friend You Need Most



By **Richard F. Ames**

A year or more of coronavirus-related lockdowns has taken its toll on many friendships. Writing in *The New Yorker*, one author observed, “It hasn’t been easy to conduct our entire social lives online. While the last 12 months would have been infinitely harder without Zoom, FaceTime and WhatsApp, they are no substitutes for being able to see loved ones in real life. Technology often gives the impression of false closeness that can lead to a lack of effort in day-to-day relationships” (“Has the pandemic changed our friendships forever?,” April 22, 2021).

Friendships are built and sustained by spending time together—something that the pandemic made very difficult for many people. Consider how long it takes simply to develop a true friendship. In 2018, researchers at the University of Kansas found that it takes at least 200 hours of time spent together for people to form a close friendship (“How to Make Friends? Study Reveals Time It Takes,” *News.ku.edu*, March 28, 2018). Then, maintaining the friendship takes *more* time spent together sharing our experiences, exposing ourselves as vulnerable to people whom we learn to trust and who learn to trust us.

Some governments have recognized the challenges of loneliness and have tried to help their citizens. A headline earlier this year shared unusual news: “Japan appoints ‘Minister for Loneliness’ after rise in suicides” (*The Independent*, February 25, 2021). Yes, some have become so depressed during pandemic lockdowns that they have taken their own lives.

Regular *Tomorrow’s World* readers know that the Bible is filled with truths about prophecy, doctrine, and our incredible future as children of the Creator God. But how many of us realize that the Bible also gives us keys to friendship and resolving the problem of loneliness? Do you have close friends? A best friend? How can you build a closer relationship with your best friend?

David and Jonathan

Ancient King David, before he became king, was anointed by the prophet Samuel to succeed King Saul (1 Samuel 16). Many of you know of David’s victory over the Philistine giant Goliath and his subsequent military victories. King Saul became jealous of David and twice tried to kill him so that his own son Jonathan could become the next king. But Jonathan became David’s best friend and resolved to protect David from King Saul’s anger. “So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, ‘Let the LORD require it at the hand of David’s enemies.’ Now

Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul” (1 Samuel 20:16–17).

This rare example of faithful and loving friendship was in the context of God’s blessing. Remember the remarkable statement in Acts 13:22 regarding David’s character: “And when He [God] had removed him [King Saul], He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will’” (Acts 13:22).

YES, YOU CAN REACH OUT TO OTHERS. PRAY AND ASK GOD TO HELP YOU LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR. MOST PEOPLE KNOW OF THE “GOLDEN RULE”—BUT HOW MANY PRACTICE IT AS A WAY OF LIFE?

Yet King David knew that his closest fellowship was with God, who had blessed him and carried him through numerous trials. When betrayed by his old friend Ahithophel, David reflected, “As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:16–17).

My friends, you and I need that same close relationship with God. We read, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). James also mentions that the patriarch Abraham “believed God.... And he was called the **friend** of God” (2:23). Who is your closest friend?

Over the years, I’ve had many, many friends, but who is my *best* friend? God blessed me with a wonderful wife, and we’ve now been married for more than 57 years. But what brought and kept us together? We had similar backgrounds in culture and education, but what cemented our friendship, our love, was the way of life God called us to live. That is the way of life you have been reading about in *Tomorrow’s World* magazine. My wife and I are not only friends, but also a family, and God is calling many not just to conversion, but to full membership in *His* Family.

Break Free from Loneliness

Longtime readers of *Tomorrow’s World* may remember an encouraging article by contributor Phil Sena. In our March–April 2010 issue, he explored the problem of loneliness and suggested ways to help break the cycle of loneliness:

Connect with others. There are other people who like some of the same things you like, or who believe the things you believe. Although it may be difficult at first, making the

effort to meet some of those people will change your life. Reach out to people who share your interests, and soon your loneliness will cease. One of the best ways to break through loneliness is to realize that there are other lonely people, and that you may be able to help them. Is there someone in your community who needs help? It does not need to be something big; maybe just taking the time to listen to an elderly shut-in

or encouraging a niece or nephew by playing catch. Making a difference in someone else’s life will make a big difference in your own (“Break Free from Loneliness”).

Yes, you can reach out to others. Pray and ask God to help you love your neighbor (Mark 12:31). That is the second Great Commandment God gives us. Most people know of the “Golden Rule”—but how many practice it as a way of life? Jesus stated it this way: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

Tomorrow’s World presenter Rod McNair wrote a helpful article in our January–February 2020 magazine, giving us five principles for overcoming loneliness. You can read the entire article online at *TomorrowsWorld.org*, but in this brief overview I’ll share just his fifth principle: “Spend time with your most important friend.” He reminded us, “Before His crucifixion, Jesus Christ told His disciples, ‘No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends’ (John 15:15). That’s an amazing statement from the Savior of all mankind!” (“Someone to Talk To”).

Have you accepted your Savior's offer of friendship? If so, what do you have in common with your friend? What are you doing to stay close to Him? Notice what Jesus asked of His friends: "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:9). Of course, you will not do that perfectly; but as you try, even when you miss the mark, your continued effort will build and strengthen your relationship with your friend and Savior!

And while all good friends certainly try to help each other, your friend Jesus Christ has offered something no one else can offer; He has promised you salvation and eternal life if you accept that promise and let Him live His holy and righteous life in you! He did what no other friend could do, paying the penalty of your sins by shedding His own innocent blood. What amazing love! Indeed, God *is* love (1 John 4:8, 16).

Some Principles of Friendship

How can we practice true friendship? Let's consider the patriarch Job and his three friends. To test Job, God allowed Satan to afflict him with great suffering. Notice that even though Job's friends misjudged him, they still showed an unusual willingness to share in Job's suffering. "So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great" (Job 2:13). They were willing to sit in a long silence to support their friend. Would you have the compassion and patience toward a friend to sit for seven days in silence? That's true dedication. The book of Proverbs also shows us important principles of friendship:

- "The righteous should choose his friends carefully" (Proverbs 12:26). Many make the mistake of compromising their character and values just to have a friend. If you are a faithful friend, you stand up for godly principles and never compromise.
- "He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates

friends" (Proverbs 17:9). A faithful friend does not carelessly disclose anyone's weaknesses but strives to help him or her overcome a character flaw.

- "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17). Or, as the *New Revised Standard Version* translates it, "A friend loves at all times, and kinsfolk are born to share adversity."

Get to Know Your Friend

The more we get to know Jesus Christ, the more we will experience the truth that He is our best friend. Naturally, we want to get to know more about our close friends. You might be surprised to learn how many have accepted a shockingly false image of Christ and His teachings. Even the Apostle Paul saw this happening and warned the Corinthian brethren, "I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!" (2 Corinthians 11:3–4).

Yes, some of the brethren in Corinth were accepting a false gospel that taught a *false Jesus*. How can you be sure you know the *true Jesus*? Remember that the Jesus of your Bible:

- **Observed the weekly seventh-day Sabbath**—not Sunday. Mark 2:28 reminds us that He is Lord of the Sabbath.
- **Was born in the autumn, when shepherds were living in the fields** (Luke 2:8). You may want to do your own research to learn whose ancient birthday was *really* celebrated on December 25.
- **Taught that we must keep the Ten Commandments**. Read Matthew 19:17 and compare this with what so many falsely teach in Christ's name.

- **Kept the biblical festivals and annual Holy Days.** Note in John 7 His observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. Neither He nor His disciples kept pagan holidays, nor dressed them up with deceptive “Christian” names.

Dear readers, I urge you to read the New Testament with a fresh perspective. Read what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote about Him. You need to study and know the real Jesus of your Bible. You will find Him very different from the traditional images that are promoted around the world!

What Is Your Friend Doing?

Do you know where Jesus Christ is right now? He is at the right hand of His Father’s throne in Heaven (Romans 8:34). And what does He look like? Scripture gives us a description of His appearance, revealing that He is “clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters” (Revelation 1:13–15). Have you been taught to picture your Savior as a long-haired, bony individual with pale skin? That wasn’t accurate

for you? “He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:24–25). Yes, the true Jesus of your Bible *always* lives to intercede for you and your sins and problems!

Not only is Jesus Christ doing His Work in Heaven, He is also doing a Work on the earth right now, preparing the way for His Second Coming! He commissioned His Church to preach His true Gospel. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). Notice that Christ’s Gospel is the good news of the coming Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14–15). And Christ will be the King reigning in that Kingdom! Can you imagine anyone proclaiming loyalty and love for a king but opposing his kingdom? Sadly, many today are doing just that when they profess their allegiance to Christ but refuse to obey the laws of His Kingdom!

Spend Time with Your Friend

We saw earlier that friendships, even ordinary human friendships, take time to develop and more time to deepen and maintain. Friends spend time

together—whether in person or via computer screens during a pandemic lockdown. They find ways to share their lives with each other. So, are you sharing your life with your Savior, and especially with His Father? How much time do you spend in prayer? Prayer will bring you closer to God as you let Him know your worries and desires, as you ask for His forgiveness and mercy, and

as you thank Him for all He has done for you.

You may be familiar with what many call “the Lord’s Prayer.” Regrettably, many professing Christians just repeat its words as a formula, without ever realizing that Jesus spoke them as a “model” for our prayer, not a rote recitation (Matthew 6:9–13). Notice what Jesus warned the disciples before giving them the model prayer: “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words” (Matthew 6:7). Some people think they are being very pious and

PRAYER WILL BRING YOU CLOSER TO GOD AS YOU LET HIM KNOW YOUR WORRIES AND DESIRES, AS YOU ASK FOR HIS FORGIVENESS AND MERCY

when He was a carpenter doing hard physical work in the cities of Judea, nor is it accurate of the resurrected Christ today!

And what is your friend doing? He is your intercessor and High Priest! “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:14–15). And what does Christ’s priesthood mean



religious by mumbling the same words repeatedly. That is not what Jesus wants! He wants us to pray from the heart, not just to repeat mindlessly the words of “the Lord’s Prayer”—or any other prayer! And notice that He wants us to pray to our Father in Heaven—just as He did! Jesus came not to take the place of His Father, but to *reveal* His Father to you and to me (Matthew 11:27).

Most of us, even if we are a bit shy, learn to be comfortable talking to a few close friends. With practice, you can have this kind of closeness with your Savior. But maybe you feel that you do not know what to pray about. If so, just open your Bible to the book of Psalms. David had a close bond with his Lord, the eternal God. David’s psalms are heartfelt expressions toward God. He shared his fears and his problems, and he even expressed his awe and wonder at the expansiveness of the universe God created. Look especially at Psalms 8, 18, 19, and 24, and you will be inspired by David’s example.

Forever with Your Friend?

As you pray, remember to include one request that Jesus asked us to pray: “Your Kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10). Your friend will soon return to this earth as the King of kings and Prince of peace. He will transform this carnal, selfish, warring world, and the result will be a millennium of peace and prosperity.


That’s the real Gospel—the real Good News. But will you be ready?

Jesus told us, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). Have you done as your friend asked? If you have come to the place in your life where you have repented and have accepted Christ’s sacrifice—His shed blood for the remission of your sins—and if you have accepted His authority over your life, I urge you to get in touch with one of the many ministers who are part of this Work. Con-

tact the Regional Office nearest you, listed on page 4 of this magazine.

When you become part of God’s Church, you also become “sons and daughters” of the Almighty (2 Corinthians 6:18) and thus not only friends of our Lord, but also brothers and sisters of His many other friends. Hebrews 2:11 tells us that our Lord “is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11)—or, as the *New International Version* puts it, “Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” Remember that God is the Father after whom the “whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Ephesians 3:15).

Meeting each Sabbath with fellow members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), you will get to know many people who share your interests and especially your love for your Savior and His Father. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are part of the “firstfruits”—the small number of people God is calling in this age to support the preaching of His true Gospel and prepare for the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He is the “resurrection and the life” (11:25). We read that “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). That same Jesus wants to be your Best Friend. Will you respond to His call? 

MAY WE
SUGGEST?

The Real God: Proofs and Promises Come to a greater understanding of the greatest friend there is! Request this **free** printed booklet from the Regional Office nearest you, or order at TomorrowsWorld.org. PDF, ePub, and Kindle are also available.



Online Sexual Harassment: What Can You Do?



How many reading this article have any idea how rampant sexual harassment is over the Internet, even amongst children? Consider the following: The BBC on June 10, 2021 highlighted a shocking fact from a government school inspection report saying that “some girls can be contacted by up to 10 or 11 different boys a night asking for nude or semi-nude images” (“Girls asked for nudes by up to 11 boys a night, Ofsted finds”). The inspectors concluded that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse have become “normalised” among school-age children.

Parents everywhere should be alarmed that this kind of behaviour is being reported in our schools, acknowledging that *they* have primary responsibility to teach their children how to behave appropriately towards members of the opposite sex, not the school system. The issue begins in the home and is taken to school, and the solution must surely also begin in the home. God’s word speaks very strongly about the importance of safeguarding our children from *all* abuse, which today includes online abuse.

More Vulnerable Than Ever

The World Wide Web Foundation published a report that supports the United Kingdom school inspection’s findings, demonstrating that this widespread abuse is an international issue by stating, “52% of young women and girls we surveyed said they’d experienced online abuse, including threatening messages, sexual harassment and the sharing of private images without consent” (“There’s a pandemic of online violence against women and girls,” *WebFoundation.org*, July 14, 2020).

The COVID pandemic over the last 18 months has only served as a catalyst to the problem, with young people spending much more time on the Internet. Online, where most people feel detached from reality to some degree, is where much of this sexual harassment takes place. In 2017, a UK survey by charity *Plan International* found that 50 percent of girls under 18 and 40 percent of boys had experienced online bullying. In many cases, this was related to the images they had shared of themselves online, some of an explicit nature. Once shared, all control of these images is lost, and they can be used for blackmail.

Social media apps like Snapchat and Whisper, increasingly used to share images amongst school-age children, provide a false hope of controlling wider exposure by limiting the time images are posted. *CommonSenseMedia.org* states, “The seemingly risk-free messaging might encourage users to share pictures containing sexy images” (“18 Social Media Apps and Sites Kids Are Using Right Now,” June 6, 2019).

Fundamentally, the deeper question should be, *Why are these children willing to share inappropriate pictures of themselves?* If children do not post this material online, part of this pervasive problem goes away. Images can easily be copied and posted elsewhere—or, worse still, edited into pornographic material—and suicide has tragically proved to be an increasing consequence of the resulting life-shattering embarrassment.

Protecting the Innocent from Online Predators

The challenge for today’s parents is that so much of their children’s communication with friends and strangers alike takes place online rather than in person.

Strangers may appear friendly or masquerade as other children while seeking to establish a manipulative relationship, a process called *grooming*. Sadly, many parents have no idea what is going on online and how insidious it can be. The Internet has become a tool for rapid communication and freely sharing images and videos. Clear evidence shows that these avenues are being exploited by despicable individuals—and parents need to become aware of what is happening.

When it comes to the behaviour of our children, we must pose the inevitable question, *Who is ultimately responsible for teaching them how to behave towards others?* Surely, it is the role of their parents and family members who love them to instill godly values and teach them the need to show kindness and respect—to prioritise the biblical focus on treating others as we would like to be treated and not reducing anyone to a mere focus of lust.

Our children need to be taught from an early age that the Internet, just like the “real world,” is a potentially harmful environment. If our children experience inappropriate, suggestive messages or see unsuitable images, they need to tell their parents or guardians. Talking with trusted loved ones about these things takes courage. It requires open lines of communication and time with parents and grandparents to discuss what they are experiencing at school or online. When responding to accounts of sexual harassment or online abuse, parents and guardians should be very careful not to blame their child, who is the victim; the responsibility lies fairly and squarely with the perpetrators, whether they are other students at school or online “friends” and contacts.

Practical steps can be taken. Parents may want to allow Internet access only on family computers in communal spaces at home, and to limit smartphone use with suitable software tools. “Private” rather than “Public” settings may limit those who can follow you or directly message you on social media, but will not nec-

essarily prevent your profile from appearing in search results. Limiting contacts to friends and family—those you really trust—is the best advice, but may not always be possible depending upon the social media platform. Certainly, sharing public images of minors—even our small and adorable children or grandchildren—in various states of undress is highly dubious online conduct.

God’s Standard of Care

Jesus Christ values children greatly and warns in no uncertain terms about how we must care for them. “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Proverbs 31 records the words of King Lemuel (Solomon) taught to him by his mother. He captures a key aspect of how someone with godly authority—such as a parent—should administer justice on behalf of children under their care: “But you must defend those who are helpless and have no hope” (Proverbs 31:8, *Contemporary English Version*). In God’s sight we have a collective responsibility to safeguard all children from harm. This is achieved first and foremost at home with parents training up children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6).

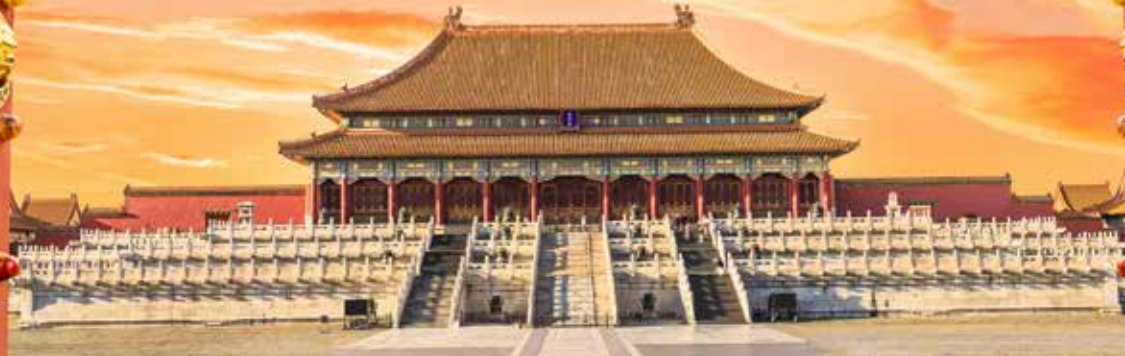
We should teach our sons and daughters an appropriate, respectful, and self-controlled approach towards others, as well as the appropriate *responses* to others in various situations. Almighty God establishes what is right and wrong in the use of our bodies and minds, even when driven in youth by the hormones He created. We must learn to honour Him by fleeing from sexual immorality and all that entails (1 Corinthians 6:18–20).

Sadly, what we see happening in the UK and in so many other nations is a direct consequence of what biblical prophecy has long warned will happen as Israelite nations turn from God; “because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:6). Thankfully, Jesus Christ will soon return to establish the government of God upon this earth (Revelation 11:15). The knowledge of God and His way of life will spread to every corner of society—throughout nations, families, and our educational systems (Isaiah 11:9). The misguided instigators of harm towards other children within schools and online will not be allowed to continue their revolting behaviour. May God hasten that day!

—Simon R.D. Roberts



China, Democracy, and Christianity



By **Stuart Wachowicz**

Western democracies took notice in July of this year when 24-year-old Hong Kong restaurant worker Tong Ying-Kit was convicted of terrorism and inciting secession, receiving a nine-year prison sentence—the first such sentence issued under a new law forced on the semiautonomous region by its Chinese rulers. Tong had crashed his motorcycle, bearing a flag with the phrase “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times” into a crowd of police officers.

For most of the past 2,000 years, China was the wealthiest nation on earth. It gave the world great inventions, such as paper, the printing press, the magnetic compass, and gunpowder—yet Westerners, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, viewed China as unworthy of respect. And China opposed as often as admired Western ideas of democracy and free speech. So, what can we learn from Scripture and history to help us better understand China?

The Bible speaks of China in terms of the peoples descended from Magog, a son of Japheth who was in turn a son of Noah. Many Bible students are familiar with the prophesied 200-million-man army marching from the east across the Euphrates River (Revelation 9:14–16), and very naturally associate that army with China, so it may be interesting to note that nothing in your Bible specifically depicts China taking up arms against the modern descendants of ancient Israel before Jesus Christ’s return.

So, why has the West held such a decidedly negative view of China? And how does China view the Western nations? Can we understand what is behind this important nation’s distrust of Western actions and values?

A History with Britain

China fought against Great Britain in the first Opium War from 1839 to 1842, with France joining the fight against China in the second Opium War from 1856 to 1860. These wars led to a defeated China ceding the territory of Hong Kong to Britain and opening formerly closed Chinese ports to Western traffic. Additionally, foreigners in China would be subject to their home country’s law, not to Chinese law.

Because of these concessions, Chinese authorities could not intervene as British merchants sold massive quantities of opium, produced in British India, to tens of thousands of Chinese, who became hopelessly addicted. Britain ignored the pleas from the Chinese authorities to cease this trade (Jack Hayes, “The Opium Wars in China,” *AsiaPacificCurriculum.ca*).

Some scholars assert that the Opium Wars were caused by China’s harsh treatment of foreigners, but even if that were the case, it is very hard to justify the sales of addictive drugs that were illegal in England. Certainly, China had a challenging relationship with Western nations and their values.

We see this as well in the Taiping Rebellion, which rose up between the first and second Opium Wars. In 1837, 23-year-old Hong Xiuquan fell ill, and

in the course of the illness believed the God of Heaven had appeared to him in vision, giving messages of a true way of life. Hong was also influenced by an American Southern Baptist missionary and began a study of the Bible. Eventually, he and Feng Yunshan, a disciple who led a group called “the God Worshippers,” joined forces and their ideas spread.

Hong sought to create a new government in China, a theocracy with him at the head. His movement was strengthened by a growing sense, especially among indigenous Han Chinese, that the Manchuria-based Qing Empire—which had overturned the mighty Ming Dynasty in 1644 to become only the second foreign force ruling China—had outlived its usefulness, especially given the disastrous results of the First Opium War. Though the Qing Empire united Manchu and Han, and even some Mongols, most in China saw the Qing as an outside oppressor—albeit far less foreign than the British.

Hong’s movement grew large, gaining millions of followers in a very short time. By 1849, it had expanded into several regions of China, soon entering a new phase with open warfare against the Qing. Hong claimed that his brother, Jesus, had told him to establish the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom on earth. “In 1850, alleging that Jesus had urged Hong to ‘fight for Heaven,’ Hong began to arm his followers. Soon, the God Worshippers were buying gunpowder in bulk and becoming organized by military rankings” (“Taiping Rebellion,” *History.com*, August 21, 2018).

Hong’s followers formed remarkably well-disciplined units of soldiers, both men’s and women’s divisions, and by 1852 had seized the southern Qing capital of Nanjing. The Qing were clearly in trouble. Western countries were seemingly watching the result and at times supporting both sides, hoping to be able to grab complete control of the country themselves. Then, in 1856, the Second Opium War broke out, and Hong expected that the Western forces would come to his aid. In the end, after the Qing agreed to terms, British Major-General Charles Gordon assisted the Qing in crushing the Taiping in 1864. The price to China was horrific. Estimates vary, but the Taiping Rebellion is believed to have claimed between 20 million and 70 million lives, making it one of the deadliest conflicts in human history (*History.com*).

China was devastated, the Qing Empire in tatters with a ruined economy beset by poverty and famine as a result of war, and the land under the control of local warlords. Is it any wonder that so many in China today fear uncontrolled Western influence? And for those who might be tempted toward sympathy for Hong and his professed love for the Bible and God’s law (including the seventh-day Sabbath), let us not forget that the very premise behind his rebellion showed his deep ignorance of the attitude Scripture tells Christians to have regarding their nations’ politics:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.... Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake (Romans 13:1–2, 5).

Once a Mighty Empire

When speaking of the last 200 years of Chinese history, few in the West bother to consider China’s thousands of years of civilization before they presume to make judgments or set policies regarding the ancient nation.

When Portuguese explorer Fernão Peres de Andrade in 1517 entered the southern Chinese port of Guangzhou, he could see that his eight weather-worn ships were tiny compared to the grand vessels of the Ming fleet. One observer recorded his impressions:

The ramparts were covered in silken banners, while on the towers reared flagstaffs from which also hung silken flags, so huge that they could be used as sails.... Such is the wealth of that country, such is its vast supply of silk, that they squander gold leaf and silk on these flags where we use cheap colors and coarse linen cloth (“China Has Dominated the West Before,” *The Atlantic*, June 6, 2020).

What Andrade and his crews did not know is that, for most of the time between the unification of

China under Emperor Qin (c. 250 BC) and their visit to Guangzhou, China had the world's biggest GDP and was the wealthiest, most organized, and most advanced society on the planet. Dynasties such as the Han (206 BC–220 AD), Tang (618–907 AD), Song (960–1279 AD), and Ming (1368–1644 AD) ruled a vast empire often encompassing more territory than present-day China. The limited interaction between Europe and China from the days of Rome had not been firsthand, but largely a matter of trade carried out indirectly through middlemen from central Asia and the Arabic world.

Marco Polo visited China between 1271 and 1295 AD, becoming a close associate of the ruling

in 1931, much of China's population rallied around Mao Zedong, leader of the Communist Party of China, whom they saw as the leader in the fight against Japan. Eventually, nationalist Chinese forces retreated to the island of Taiwan and Mao took the reins of power, ruling with a Western ideology that during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s went so far as to forbid the study of ancient Chinese philosophers like Confucius.

Some may find it ironic that a nation so distrustful of foreign influences took so readily to the European idea of Marxism. It is significant that, shortly after the death of Mao Zedong, the Communist Party of China adopted a framework it called "socialism

with Chinese characteristics." After Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping took the helm of China. He had the task of taking a country that had endured a century and a half of strife, war, famine, and questionable leadership, with a broken economy, a ruined education system, and a nearly destitute population, and bringing it into the modern world. Despite the opinions one may have of China today, the change has been

WHEN SPEAKING OF THE LAST 200 YEARS OF CHINESE HISTORY, FEW IN THE WEST BOTHER TO CONSIDER CHINA'S THOUSANDS OF YEARS OF CIVILIZATION BEFORE THEY PRESUME TO MAKE JUDGMENTS

classes at the time. However, he saw the nation during a phase when it had been conquered by a foreign people, the Mongols—originally led by Kublai Khan—who established their rule under the Yuan Dynasty (1259–1368 AD). The Chinese always viewed the Yuan as foreigners and finally expelled them in 1368 AD. The wealthy and powerful Ming period followed, but most of that wealth remained in the region as China largely turned inward during the years when the British Empire was expanding across the globe.

China's Troubled Turn Westward

A century ago, China played a small but significant role aiding the Allied powers during World War I, but those efforts were largely ignored afterward. Nevertheless, having engaged with the West, it is no surprise that a range of Western ideas took root in China—including the communist ideology developed a century earlier by German philosopher Karl Marx. Following the horrific Japanese attack on Manchuria

faster and greater in magnitude than any other nation in recorded history has ever achieved. The scale and magnitude of this transformation, especially given China's massive population, is essentially unparalleled in human history.

And this brings us to the present day. Chinese leaders have seen firsthand the allure of Western ideas—as well as the damage Western ideas have brought to their nation. Yet they also want to bring prosperity to their people and to regain the power, influence, and respect their nation once had.

Jesus Christ brought Christianity to a Roman Empire where democracy was reviled, yet He never counseled rebellion. He knew that no government other than the Kingdom of God would suffice for our troubled world—and that only He, as its King, could bring to our world the peace and prosperity it so desperately needs. We pray for all who are now oppressed, yet as Christians our ultimate plea should not be "Liberate my country," but, rather, "Your Kingdom come!" ^[TW]

Is This the Only Day of Salvation?

If it were, how could God be fair?

Imagine that speed limit signs were written in a secret code, with symbols you had never learned to decipher. In fact, you didn't even know there *was* a speed limit—after all, you couldn't read the signs, and no one had ever told you to slow down as you drove. Then, one day, while you were barreling down the highway at 80 miles per hour, you were pulled over and arrested for exceeding the speed limit you'd had no idea even existed.

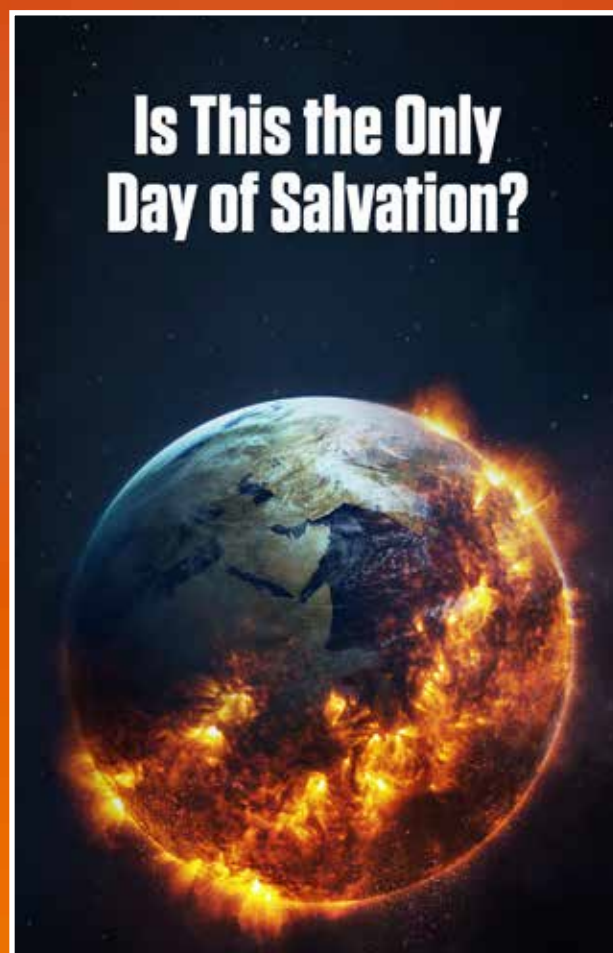
You tried to explain, but the law wouldn't hear it; you'd been expected to somehow decipher the signs yourself and abide by the secret speed limit. Having failed, you—like everyone else who unwittingly committed that crime—were shocked when the judge sentenced you to lifelong imprisonment.

A God of True Justice

Reasonable people would call the above an unfair and unjust system. Not only was the punishment disproportionate to the crime; violators didn't even know they were committing a crime! Yet much of mainstream "Christianity" ascribes to God a far *more* unjust system, in which people who live and die with no knowledge of the Bible or Jesus Christ are sentenced to eternity in hellfire.

We at *Tomorrow's World* do not believe in an unjust God. Rather, we take the Bible at its word, believing that "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and that "He does not afflict willingly" (Lamentations 3:33). Our free resource *Is This the Only Day of Salvation?* will help you understand from your own Bible exactly what God has planned for those who have died unaware of Him and His ways. When you understand the truth of God's plan, you will rejoice in the knowledge that His plan is truly just and fair.

There is no cost at all for this offer. You can order *Is This the Only Day of Salvation?* by scanning the code below with your smartphone, visiting *Tomorrow's World.org*, or contacting any of our Regional Offices, listed on page 4 of this magazine, and requesting that a copy be mailed to you.



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FORGOTTEN
LESSONS
OF HISTORY





There are sins that destroy civilizations.

By Douglas S. Winnail

Today we are witnessing a massive effort to *totally transform* the cultures of the Western world.

Behaviors long viewed as immoral perversions—abortion, prostitution, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, transvestitism, and transgenderism—are now being promoted as acceptable and even celebrated as “alternative lifestyles.”

Governments and churches are welcoming these “liberating” trends, and schoolchildren are being taught to view these behaviors as legitimate and desirable. Many who oppose or question this agenda are attacked as narrow-minded bigots clinging to an antiquated set of values. In some places, negative discourse about these now-sanctioned behaviors is often labeled “hate speech” and punished with fines or imprisonment. *But are we witnessing real progress that will usher in a new era of acceptance, equity, and social harmony? Or are we watching history repeat itself with the return of perversions that will hasten the decline of nations and the debasement of civilization?*

It has long been said that if we don’t remember the lessons of history, *we will repeat the mistakes of history*. So, are there *sobering lessons of history* that are especially relevant for us today? Are we making the *same mistakes* that led to the down-

fall and demise of earlier cultures and empires? If so, why aren’t modern leaders and educators pointing out the dangers of blindly going down the *same path* to destruction? Why isn’t the media calling out those who ignore the tragic lessons of the past? The record of history is certainly full of vivid examples—*if we have eyes to see*.

The Rise of “Gay Rights”

Since the fall of the Roman Empire, generally biblical moral values about marriage and sexuality have characterized much of Western civilization. These values were widespread in America, Western Europe, among the British-descended peoples, and in areas where their influence spread. However, in the last several decades, these moral values have been attacked, mocked, and pushed aside in the Western world by a rising tide of enforced secular values. Prior to the early 1960s, there were laws against abortion and all 50 states in America had laws that criminalized homosexual activity. Yet, today, nearly 70 percent of Americans now support same sex-marriage—up from only 27 percent in 1996 (“Gay marriage is the left’s biggest culture war victory,” *TheWeek.com*, June 8, 2021). “Majorities of adults in all 15 countries in Western Europe surveyed by Pew Research Center in 2017 support

same-sex marriage.... Support is even higher in Sweden (88%), Denmark (86%) and the Netherlands (86%)” (“Where Europe Stands on Gay Marriage and Civil Unions,” *PewResearch.org*, October 28, 2019). In recent years, Gay “Pride” parades have attracted millions of spectators and thousands of scantily-clad participants in many Western countries—generating considerable tourist dollars for the sponsoring cities. In 2021, U.S. embassies were instructed to fly the rainbow flag in honor of “Pride Month.”

The most recent battle in the ongoing cultural war is transgenderism. American president Joseph Biden has declared “transgender rights” as “the civil rights issue of our time”—and the push is on to eliminate anything that appears to discriminate against transsexuals. In America, public libraries are even sponsoring “Drag Queen story hours” in which men dressed as women read to children about two worms that love each other and a baby animal with two mommies or two daddies—themes that are also portrayed in animated cartoons on today’s children’s television programs.

Tragically, there is little or no mention of the serious health risks associated with these “liberated” lifestyles: greatly increased rates of HIV infections and other opportunistic diseases, greater risk for various types of cancer, serious depression, increased risk of suicide, and dying 10–20 years earlier than the average person (“Negative Health Consequences of Same-Sex Sexual Behavior,” *CMDA.com*, June 2019). This important information goes deliberately unmentioned due to threats of legal action and intimidation, and because of widespread propaganda against saying anything negative about this lifestyle or to discourage others from following it.

The Decline of Biblical Values

During the decades when the promotion of homosexuality was gaining strength, *another trend* was also developing that the media seldom connects to the advance of this secular agenda—the *declining influence* of biblical Christianity in the Western world. In the early 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that prayer and Bible reading in public schools were unconstitutional. As a result, students were no longer exposed to biblical concepts of right and wrong outside their homes, and were encouraged to make up their own

minds about moral values, regardless of whether their ideas totally contradicted what the Bible reveals.

The impact of secular theories and ideas is undeniable. Darwinian evolutionary theory postulates that there is no need for a Creator, theologians cast doubts on the Bible, educators claim there are no moral absolutes, scientists insist that human reason alone is adequate to solve human problems—all while academics and media voices ridicule Christianity. Together, these factors have accelerated the declining influence of biblical values in Western society and fostered an environment conducive to the promotion of an immoral and amoral agenda.

This has led in recent decades to plummeting church attendance. Baptisms continue to decline and the number of people claiming no religious affiliation has increased across the Western world. Today, only about 24 percent of Americans regularly attend church (*Statista.org*). In the United Kingdom, only about 2 percent of young people belong to the Church of England (*TheGuardian.com*), which has seen its membership steadily decline for the last 50 years. In Australia, nearly half of the population “describe themselves as having no religion” (*RoyMorgan.com*). In New Zealand, only about 9 percent of people attend church regularly (*NZHerald.co.nz*).

In light of these trends, it is no surprise that the highest acceptance of homosexual behavior in the world is found in so-called “Christian” nations of the West, among the younger generation in First World countries who lean left politically and are *religiously unaffiliated* (“The Global Divide on Homosexuality Persists,” *PewResearch.org*, June 25, 2020).

In this increasingly secular environment, more and more people have lost sight of—or never known—what the Bible says about marriage and human sexual behavior. A recent survey by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University found that over the last 30 years in America, the percentage of people who believe in God has fallen from 86 percent to 46 percent, and the percentage of people who view the Bible as accurate and the reliable word of God has fallen from 70 percent to 41 percent. The survey also found that only six percent of Americans hold a biblical worldview, leading the researchers to conclude that “the Bible is increasingly rejected as a trustworthy and relevant

document of life principles” (“Just Two-Thirds of American Adults Say They Are Christian: Survey,” *ChristianHeadlines.com*, June 9, 2021).

The Bible contains *very clear* statements about marriage and sexual behaviors that are the *exact opposite* of the modern progressive agenda—so it is no surprise that biblical instructions are maligned and ignored. The Bible reveals that God created biological men and women in His image to be fruitful and multiply heterosexually within monogamous marriages (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:24). The Bible plainly says that it is an *abomination* for men to have sexual relationships with other men (Leviticus 18:22) and for women to have sexual relations with other women (Romans 1:26–27), also stating that it is an *abomination* for men to dress like women and vice versa (Deuteronomy 22:5).

We are also told in the New Testament that fornicators, idolaters, homosexuals, and drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9–10). The Apostle Paul clearly condemned the homosexual relationships that were prevalent in his day as unnatural and “vile passions” that emanate from a “debased mind” (Romans 1:24–32). He also writes in 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

Sadly, many have no qualms about mocking and rejecting these biblical instructions. There are even those who claim that Christian values are discriminatory and hateful and should be replaced by accepting attitudes towards homosexuality, same-sex marriages,

and transgenderism. However, the Bible warns us, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Are these just empty words? Can individuals and nations simply ignore what God has inspired in His word? Are there important lessons in history and vivid examples in the Bible that record what has happened to nations and cultures that have chosen to ignore their Creator’s instructions about sexuality and marriage?

Sodom’s Sick Society

One of the most ancient and sobering lessons of history is recorded in the book of Genesis. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were totally destroyed by fire and brimstone during the days of the patriarch Abraham (about 2,000 BC). Sodom and Gomorrah were prosperous cities in a well-watered plain near the Dead Sea (Genesis 13:10). Today, the whole area around the Dead Sea is a dry, barren, desolate wasteland of rocks and sand—as it has been for thousands of years following the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Archaeologists have located sites that could be the remains of ancient Sodom—Tell el-Hammam and Bab edh-Dhra. Both sites show destruction by fire and layers of ash from about the time of Abraham, and both are near the Dead Sea. Although neither site has been clearly established as the ancient city of Sodom, the time, nature of destruction, and location lend credence to the biblical description of these ancient cities (“Which Site is Sodom?,” *Biblical Research Bulletin*, vol. XIV, no. 1, 2014).

However, while evidence from archaeology can provide us with a description of *what* happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, *only* the Bible records *why* this sudden destruction occurred—and that reason is extremely relevant to our situation today.

We read that the men of Sodom were “exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD” (Genesis 13:13) and that their sin was “very grave” (Genesis 18:20). When two angels, appearing as men, came to visit Abraham’s nephew, Lot, the men of Sodom surrounded the house and demanded to have sex with them (Genesis 19:4–5). As a result of this perverted behavior, the angels led Lot and his family out of the city before it was totally destroyed by fire and brimstone (Genesis 19:24–28).



Sodom and Gomorrah Afire by Jacob de Wet II, 1680

Some try to discount the role that homosexuality played in this catastrophic destruction by claiming that attempted sexual assault was the sole sin that led to Sodom's undoing. However, this argument totally ignores other scriptures that clearly point to homosexuality and other sexual perversions as major factors in this disaster; Ezekiel 16:40–50 mentions pride, luxury, idleness, neglect of the poor, and *abominations* (which include homosexuality—see Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). In the New Testament, the book of Jude states that Sodom and Gomorrah were an example of cities destroyed by fire for “having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh”—unnatural uses of sex (Jude 1:7).

But what does the sin of Sodom and its destruction have to do with us today? In Luke 17:28–30, we are told that when Jesus Christ returns to judge this earth, conditions will be just like they were in Sodom during the days of Lot. Today, we are seeing the acceptance and promotion of homosexuality and other sexual perversions on a massive scale in nations that once claimed to believe in God and biblical values. How much longer will God let this go on?

Pagan Greece and Rome

In history classes, we hear a lot about Greek democracy and Roman law, but we seldom hear about what was socially acceptable in these ancient pagan cultures—practices and attitudes towards sexual behavior that until recent decades were repulsive to Western minds conditioned by nearly 2,000 years of biblical teachings about sexuality.

Sexual promiscuity was widespread among pagan Greeks and Romans. A married man could have sexual relations with male and female slaves. Prostitution was accepted, legal, and taxed—bringing financial gain to local governments and to pagan temples that were served by male and female “sacred” prostitutes—as at ancient Corinth. For men, there was no stigma in being bisexual, and *pederasty*—sexual relations between adult males and adolescent boys—was considered a normal practice. In fact, the adult male-adolescent boy relationship was considered a “higher form” of love involving a sexual and intellectual relationship between *equals*. It is no coincidence that the Greek god Eros and his Roman counterpart Cupid are depicted as naked boys.

Pornographic art was commonly on display in homes and public baths. Gymnasiums, where men and boys exercised in the nude to develop their physique, were often where these adult-adolescent connections began. Today, we would call these sexual predators *pedophiles*. Infanticide was also widely practiced by the Greeks and Romans, and, in these ancient pagan cultures, women were considered inferior to men, created by the gods to be troublesome to mankind.

The Emperor Tiberius kept groups of boys for his personal perverted pleasures. Nero publicly married a transvestite man and had relations with other men and women. Emperor Elagabalus also married a man—in addition to having several female wives and even more female lovers. Suetonius, a Roman writer in the second century AD, compiled a catalogue of this disgusting behavior in *The Twelve Caesars*.

We learn from history that these perverted behaviors have been around for thousands of years. The “playboy” lifestyle, widespread legal prostitution, killing of infants, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, transvestitism, and pederasty are neither new nor progressive. It is unsurprising that moral decay and debauchery are mentioned among the *reasons* for the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

It was into this pagan cultural environment of murder, sexual immorality, perversion, and exploitation for personal gratification that Jesus and His Apostles began to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and promote biblical moral values. Jesus stressed the importance of biblical marriage and denounced fornication and adultery. He also taught that *porneia*—deviant sexual behavior—was not only evil, but a legitimate cause for divorce (Matthew 19:4–9). Such behavior is totally contrary to the law of God and will keep people from entering the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 1 Timothy 1:8–9).

The coming of Christianity and the spread of biblical principles throughout the Roman world *elevated* standards of sexual morality, halted infanticide, enhanced the status of women, strengthened the family, and eventually led to abolishing gladiatorial combat in the arena (see *How Christianity Changed the World* by Alvin Schmidt). Even while the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was corrupted over time, biblical principles of morality continued to influence the cultural values of

Western civilization—*until the last few decades*. Again, we need to ask: *How do these historical examples relate to us today, and what lies ahead for Western nations?*

Lessons from the Past

Today we are witnessing a sexual revolution that is *deliberately rejecting* biblical morality and *returning* to the sexual promiscuity and depraved perversions of the ancient pagan world—under the mistaken notions of tolerance, progress, and social justice. Yet history shows that individuals and cultures that go down the path of gratifying immoral lusts and ignoring our Creator’s laws *come to a terrible end*.

Many voices in government, universities, the media, and even religion are *championing* the causes of abortion, homosexuality, and transgenderism. A Harvard group even published a recent paper on the supposed benefits of legalizing prostitution—such as “tax revenue” (“To Protect Women, Legalize Prostitution,” *HarvardCRCL.org*, October 1, 2019).


Yet the Bible—which speaks out against prostitution—reminds us that biblical events were recorded as a *warning* for future generations, especially for those living at the end of the age (1 Corinthians 10:11). Jesus said that social conditions at the end of the age and just before His return would be as in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot in Sodom (Luke 17:26–30). In Noah’s day “all flesh had corrupted their way” as a result of widespread wickedness, and God brought that world to an end with a great flood (Genesis 6:5–13). In the days of Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah were totally destroyed because of the magnitude of their sinful ways—which included homosexual perversions. Yet this was only about 400 years after the Flood. The ancient nations of Israel and Judah, with knowledge of these recorded events, chose to follow in the footsteps of Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:10; Jeremiah 23:14). As a result, they were conquered and carried away into captivity by Assyria and Babylon.

Today, most in the West appear to be *blind* to the fact that we are repeating the mistakes of history. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, infanticide was common and acceptable. Today, abortion is legal

and takes the lives of millions of babies each year. In the Greco-Roman world, pornographic art, sexual promiscuity, prostitution, and homosexuality were common throughout the Empire. Today, pornography has become a billion-dollar industry and is spread worldwide via the Internet. Sexual promiscuity is rampant, human sex-trafficking is the second largest criminal activity in the world, and homosexuality and prostitution are defended by courts and promoted by graduates of Harvard University. Yet when Harvard was founded in 1636 by Puritans, it was intended to train ministers to know God, know the Bible, and live accordingly (“Shield and ‘Veritas’ History,” *HCS. Harvard.edu*).

What many in the West have forgotten is that there is a God who causes nations to rise and fall (Job 12:23; Daniel 2:21; 4:17). He promises blessings for obedience to His laws and serious consequences for individuals and nations that ignore and violate those laws (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28). Many nations of the West have forgotten that they are the descendants of the ancient Israelites—the people to whom Moses was inspired to write more than 3,000 years ago, “After my death you will become *utterly corrupt, and turn away from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days*, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands” (Deuteronomy 31:29).

The mission of the early Church was to preach the Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God and *warn* of the consequences of turning away from God and His ways (Mark 1:14–15). That is also the mission of the Church today—to “cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1). Unless the nations of the West wake up and learn from the lessons of history, their fate will follow the path of Sodom, Gomorrah, Greece, and Rome.

Will *you* learn from the mistakes of the past and avoid the consequences that are coming in the days ahead? Will you be ready for the return of Jesus Christ, when the world learns to truly *live by the laws of God*? That decision is yours to make. 

MAY WE
SUGGEST?

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Kabul and Prophecy

By **William Bowmer**

Few historians were surprised when the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan in August of this year. The nation—or, more accurately, the area that has sometimes comprised a nation but has often been a region of warring tribes or part of another empire—has been a thorn in the side of foreign invaders for many centuries.

As headline after headline proclaimed the “fall” of Afghanistan, some wondered about the clumsiness and danger of the United States’ hasty withdrawal, which gave a former enemy access to valuable military equipment and technology while risking the lives not just of Westerners in the country, but also Afghans who had supported the U.S. presence. Others wondered about U.S. relations with NATO allies and others left vulnerable by the sudden retreat. Still others wondered whether China, seeking to expand its Belt and Road Initiative, might now find a way to make Afghanistan’s Muslims their allies even while persecuting their own Muslim Uyghurs.

Only a few, however, have been able to look at the situation through the eyes of biblical prophecy. While many lament the fall of Kabul, what can Bible students learn from the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan?

Ethnos Against Ethnos

Even before the current conflict, which cost more than 150,000 Afghan lives as well as the lives of thousands of Western soldiers and contractors, Afghanistan has not

had a history of long-lasting and stable governments. For centuries, the region was not even a sovereign nation, home to an array of tribes without great affinity for one another, including the Aimaq, Baloch, Hazara, Kyrgyz, Nuristani, Pashtun, Sadat, Tajik, Turkmen, and Uzbek. Some tribes profess the Sunni variety of Islam; others are Shi’ite. Some have closer ties to countries beyond Afghanistan than to their fellow Afghans. Of these tribes, the Pashtun to the south is the largest. Significantly, the Pashtun are tribally related to much of neighboring Pakistan, which has consistently supported the Taliban in fighting Western encroachment.

These ethnic divisions were key to the initial success of the American-led invasion in 2001. Western forces gained their foothold by allying with northern tribes that had historically been at odds with the Pashtuns who comprised the core of the Taliban. Ironically, as the Taliban learned the Western lesson of “identity politics,” they began to make deliberate outreach efforts to members of the northern tribes, including them in leadership and development initiatives and offering them economic assistance—stressing the point that, despite some differences, the contending tribes had much more in common with each other than with the decadent Western invaders.

Jesus Christ’s end-time prophecy in this regard should readily come to mind: “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matthew 24:7). Significantly, the Greek word translated here as “nation” is *ethnos*—which more precisely means “ethnicity” or “tribe.” Devastating war has cer-

tainly brought pestilence to Afghanistan, and there has been an ongoing struggle between *ethnos* and *ethnos*—peoples against peoples.

History Forgotten

One might wonder whether Western military leaders who decided to invade Afghanistan were ignorant of the nation's history, or whether they knew it but chose to ignore it. For several centuries, Western invaders have repeatedly tried and failed to maintain a permanent foothold in the troubled region. Were America's post-9/11 troops hoping to do what no Western aggressor had done before?

Even without considering the British Empire's experience in centuries past, Western strategists' memories should have been fresh regarding the Soviet Union's trouble in the region. After a communist government took hold of Afghanistan in 1978, Soviet troops entered the nation, battling Afghan freedom fighters seeking to topple the communists. Many analysts consider the costly Afghanistan campaign a major factor in the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union.

The Soviets, in turn, could have taken a lesson from the British Empire. The British lasted for just four years in Kabul after an 1828 invasion and did not regain influence there until 1879. Despite nominal British control, Afghanistan remained neutral in World War I, then declared independence from Great Britain in 1919 under King Amanullah Khan, who sought to bring Western reforms to his independent Afghanistan. Khan's attempt was short-lived, and Muslim traditionalists forced him to abdicate in 1929.

Now, the United States finds itself in the same position of failure so familiar to Great Britain and Russia. Great Britain's troubles in Afghanistan began while there was still a powerful British Empire, and ended during the years when the Empire had started to wane. What does the rise of the Taliban tell us about America's future?

The Fall of the United States?

Americans were shocked this past August when victorious Taliban soldiers staged a photo commemorating the capture of Kabul, striking a pose that emulated—or perhaps was meant to mock—the U.S.' famous Iwo Jima monument commemorating a vital World War II victory. Such victories are, for the U.S., increasingly

distant memories. While many analysts marvel at the change in America's standing as a world power, Bible students are not surprised. Long ago, God warned the ancestors of the modern British and American peoples that a time would come when they would fall from power on the world stage: "Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.... I will break the pride of your power" (Leviticus 26:17–19).

And what did this Afghan failure cost the U.S.? *Forbes* magazine calculated that the war in Afghanistan, lasting for two decades, cost more than \$2 trillion—amounting to \$300 million per day—with some costs not yet accounted for. Compare that to the \$150 billion—around \$800 billion in today's dollars—the U.S. spent on the Vietnam War. The war did not only cost the U.S. a great deal of money; the nation has paid a tremendous price in international respect. Some Europeans even accused the U.S. of violating treaty agreements by rushing U.S. forces out of Afghanistan without coordinating with or even informing NATO allies.

What does this portend for Taiwan, the tiny island that has kept itself independent from mainland China since 1949? Watching Hong Kong fall more and more firmly under mainland China's control, and seeing that the U.S. no longer has a reliable record as a protector of its allies, we should not forget that Afghanistan shares a 47-mile border with mainland China and has expressed interest in closer relations.

"China respects the right of the Afghan people to independently determine their own destiny, and stands ready to develop good-neighborly, friendly and cooperative relations with Afghanistan, and to play a constructive role in the peace and reconstruction of Afghanistan," said Foreign Ministry representative Hua Chunying. Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen has welcomed China's support and said the Taliban would "guarantee the safety of investors and workers" from China. With the prospect of expanding its Belt and Road Initiative through Kabul, China finds itself at a powerful and influential crossroads in international relations, with the U.S. essentially reduced to the role of onlooker.

Who would have foreseen a world in which the U.S. had lost not just its military superpower status but also its place as an exemplar of the highest values?

You might be surprised to learn that Bible students familiar with end-time prophecy have known for some time that this was coming. We read, “All your lovers have forgotten you; they do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased” (Jeremiah 30:14). America’s “lovers”—its allies—have begun to lose their former feeling for the superpower that was once their trusted benefactor and protector. Even so, God would welcome back His wayward American and British-descended peoples upon their repentance, though they have “played the harlot” through their dubious dealings with many nations (3:1).

Righteousness or Repression?

When the Taliban last held stable power, before U.S. forces attacked in the wake of Osama bin Laden’s assault on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, they had imposed on Afghanistan a strict form of Islamic law in the form of a moral code abhorrent to most secular people in the West—and many religious people as well.

Today, many Afghan women have grown used to the Westernized standards fostered by the deposed Afghan government, but within days of the August coup a shift toward the old norms became visible. Taliban leaders assured women that they would be required only to wear the *hijab* head covering, rather than the full-body *burkha* preferred by the most conservative. As for post-war retribution, the situation was murkier. Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen told BBC presenter Yalda Hakim, “We assure the people in Afghanistan, particularly in the city of Kabul, that their properties, their lives are safe—there will be no revenge on anyone,” he told her. “We are the servants of the people and of this country.” But with house-to-house searches reported within days of the Taliban takeover, and with U.S. facial recognition software and biometric information falling into Taliban hands, some fear a wave of repression reminiscent of the worst extremes of the 1990s that for a time made many Afghans sympathetic to the Western forces fighting against the Taliban. To keep that sympathy, the Taliban must now defeat ISIS-K fighters hoping to bring Afghanistan under a more conservative variety of Islamic governance.


Some are hopeful, pointing to positive steps the Taliban were able to take during their last short rule after the fall of the Soviet Union. United Nations observers noted that heroin production in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan was almost entirely eliminated by 2001—a significant worldwide development, as 90 percent of the world’s heroin comes from poppies grown in just a few Afghan provinces. Subsequently, after years of Western coalition military presence, heroin production reached an all-time high in 2017. Western forces took great pains to keep heroin profits out of Taliban hands—but those profits fell into others’ hands instead.

The Future Rise of Righteous Government

What Taliban fighters—and, now, Taliban rulers—have failed to understand is that no theocracy can succeed unless God is actually in charge of it. Today’s true Christians certainly strive to live godly lives, but they understand that it is not their duty to establish civil governance that, even at its best, could only be a pale and faulty imitation of the coming Kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ reminded His followers that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). Rather, today’s faithful Christians will be born into that Kingdom at Christ’s return, to assist Him in His millennial rule (Revelation 20:4–6). No earthly military victory or policy platform can make this happen; only the returning Jesus Christ can and will do this when He returns (Revelation 1:7).

When one’s country is under siege by foreign aggressors, it may be tempting to think of picking up arms and joining in the fight. That’s what happened in Afghanistan, where eventually enough Afghans were willing to support the Taliban that the old secular government could not survive without being artificially propped up by U.S. force. But that is not the role a Christian is supposed to play. Christians already have their “citizenship” in heaven, in the coming Kingdom of God. Their job is to live in a foreign land, this Satan-scarred world, while obeying the laws of their soon-coming King, Jesus Christ.

And this is the most certain and best news of all: A time is soon coming when all tribes and nations will look to Jerusalem, to the throne of the King of kings, Jesus Christ, whose benevolent autocracy—the true theocracy our war-ravaged world needs—will expand its influence across all of planet Earth. 

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Does God consider it appropriate for Christians to serve in their nations' armed forces?

Question: Your magazine often writes about nations' military involvements and shows how biblical prophecy foretells of war. The Old Testament is filled with accounts of the Israelites in battle. Is it proper for a Christian to serve his or her country as a soldier in war?

Answer: Jesus Christ set a clear standard for His followers: "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you" (Luke 6:27–28). He also taught that we are to live by "every word of God"—to guide our lives by every word of the Bible (Luke 4:4; Matthew 4:4).

Christians have a responsibility to obey government authority (Romans 13:1–7). Jesus explained that His followers must pay taxes to civil governments and strive to fulfill duties imposed by civil society (Matthew 22:21). This applies not only to democracies; Christ gave His command to people living under the sometimes-despotic sway of the Roman Empire. However, when the laws or actions of human governments conflict with God's law, Christians must act on an allegiance far higher than to Caesar (Acts 4:19; 5:29, 32).

God did require the Israelites to fight several wars, directly under His command, under the conditions of the Old Covenant. Yet Israel eventually *rejected* God's rule, so He put them away and divorced them (Jeremiah 3:8). Later, as we know, Jesus Christ came and made the Holy Spirit available to all who were baptized and obeyed Him, and He promised to return as King of the Kingdom of God on this earth. Christians today understand that this Kingdom is not yet ruling in this world; Jesus said, "My kingdom is **not** of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36). Until Christ returns, Christians have an allegiance that is not of this world (Philippians 3:20). Today's Christians are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13), awaiting His Kingdom.


What should Christians do if they are drafted into mandatory military service? United States

citizens are currently required by law to register with the Selective Service System within 30 days of their eighteenth birthday. This requirement does not violate the biblical principles set out in Matthew 22:21 and Romans 13:1–7, and does not imply consent to participation in war. In fact, registration can provide young Christians the opportunity to state formally their conscientious objection to military service.

Organizations such as the Center on Conscience and War (CenterOnConscience.org—not affiliated with *Tomorrow's World*) can provide help in documenting one's conscientious objection. But the most fundamental documentation is that true conscientious objectors are living by their convictions now, so that when a draft comes no one can accuse them of acting from cowardice or convenience, rather than deep, long-held religious conviction.

Many countries make provisions to allow sincere conscientious objectors to be excluded from mandatory military service, or to be placed in non-military roles of public service to fulfill a national service commitment. The U.S. has historically made these allowances during times of a military draft. In such situations, Christians may be able to serve their countries without violating God's law.

Christians who live in nations where military service is compulsory must make a decision that can carry severe consequences. By obeying their Savior, they may be risking prison, torture, or death for refusing to serve in the military. Christ gave an important principle when He explained that "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). Those who have their hearts set on the Kingdom of God will make that Kingdom their priority and will not jeopardize their place in that Kingdom by fighting and killing others in the wars of men.

To understand more about that coming Kingdom, of which Christ's followers in this age are ambassadors and in which they will help administer a truly righteous government under Him, request a free copy of *The World Ahead: What Will It Be Like?* or read it online at TomorrowsWorld.org. 



THE Works OF HIS HANDS

The Blessing of Rain

The Apostle Paul in Acts 14:17 describes “rain from heaven” as a sign of God’s goodness that He provides as a witness to all of mankind. Rain is, indeed, an often-neglected blessing. Though a surprise shower here and there may bring us a touch of sorrow when we must reschedule plans dependent on clear skies, life on earth is wonderfully dependent on the liquid blessing that pours from the clouds above us.

While the planet Venus apparently experiences some sulfuric acid rain in its atmosphere, and Titan, a moon of Saturn, seems to suffer rain showers of poisonous liquid methane, Earth is blessed with rainfall of life-giving water. Many children learn about rain and our planet’s water cycle in their earliest science classes: Heat from the Sun evaporates water from the ocean and other sources, evaporated water forms clouds in the sky, those clouds shower rain back down to the earth, and the rain filters through soil before evaporating yet again, repeating the process. This cycle is a vital, continuous process in our environment and makes life possible on our world.

Yet there is much more to rain than the diagrams we see in our first science textbooks. Rain brings benefits that are easy to miss, and our world has been more intelligently designed and more finely tuned to take full advantage of the blessing of rain than most of us understand.

The Special Benefits of Rain

Have you ever felt that the plants and tree leaves around you seem a little more lush and green a few days after a rainstorm?

That is because rain brings special benefits that other sources of water do not, due in part to the at-

mospheric processes that generate rain droplets. For instance, rainwater is much higher in oxygen content than other sources of water. This extra oxygen can help the plants when the ground is particularly saturated with water. While other sources of water, such as tap water, can cause roots to rot when the ground is over-saturated, the oxygen in rainwater helps to prevent this. At the same time, rainwater has not spent as much time in the ground before the plants take it in, making it “softer”—having a much lower concentration of salt—and thus more beneficial to plants.

Also, as the rain falls through the air to the ground, it brings with it additional nitrogen—the most abundant gas in our atmosphere. Nitrogen, in the form of ammonium and nitrates, is vital to plant health and is absorbed through their roots and leaves. Interestingly, the lightning that can sometimes accompany rainstorms helps to produce nitrates, splitting nitrogen molecules and combining the newly separated atoms with oxygen to form the nitrates rain brings to the ground—a process that reminds us of the psalmist’s praise of the Creator: “He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; *He makes lightning for the rain*” (Psalm 135:7).

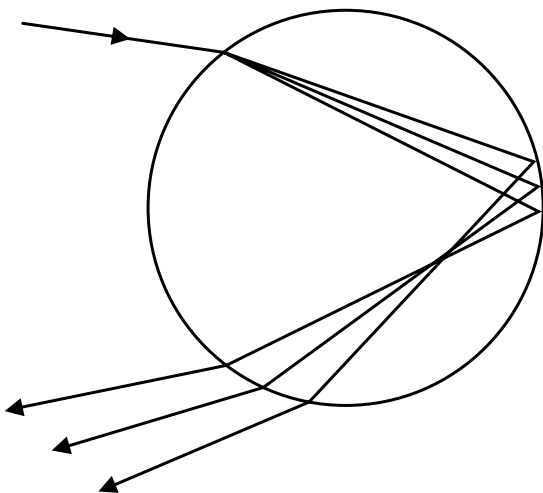
Additional atmospheric components that combine with the rain droplets cause the water to be *slightly* acidic. When this water is soaked into the ground, this low-level acidity helps to free key nutrients from the soil, such as copper and zinc, making them more available to plants’ hungry roots. (This is quite different from the effect of *acid rain*, which releases more harmful compounds than helpful ones as a result of pollutants or even volcanic eruptions.)

Even the physical impact of rain droplets and the “washing” they bring provides benefits. When the rain-fall is not too heavy, it helps clear dust and debris from the surface of leaves, which need exposure to the sun. Rain on leaves helps to clean out their stomata—pores that open and close on a leaf to control the plant’s respiration, or gas exchange.

Destruction, and a Promise

Of course, too much of any good thing can be a problem, and rain is no exception. The rain that accompanies the winds of cyclones, hurricanes, and typhoons can be an agent of terrible destruction. From the sin of our first parents, mankind has lived in a world that does not consider the needs of humanity first. Too much rain in some portions of the planet causes floods and mudslides, bringing tremendous devastation. In fact, the Bible records that, more than 4,000 years ago, the Eternal One used rain, in combination with the unleashed “fountains of the great deep” (Genesis 7:11) to flood the entire world of that day. All land-dwelling life was destroyed, save Noah’s family and the animals he was charged to protect on his ark.

Yet at the end of that terrible period, God displayed another of rain’s wondrous gifts. Inspired Scripture tells us that God used the rainbow as a token of His promise never to flood the world again (Genesis 9:12-17). An astonishing quirk of the laws of physics, rainbows appear when the sun is at just the right angle behind



As illustrated above, light enters water droplets and is broken into its component colors as it is reflected back to observers, creating a rainbow.

the observer. The rays of light, refracted through the raindrops as through tiny prisms, are transformed, split into component colors by the raindrops, and we see a beautiful display of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and indigo.

Those beautiful colors appear to arc in the sky between the viewer and the storm, just as God’s promise stands between mankind and the threat of another global flood.

From the Hand of God

While we cannot control all the forces that operate within our world, we have the opportunity to appeal to the One who can. The rain is His creation, and He tells us that He uses it in our time to fulfill His purposes, just as He did in Noah’s day.

The prophetic warnings given to ancient Israel, which still hold meaning for us today, remind us that rain is provided to a land only at God’s will. If the Israelites would obey their Creator and seek His face, He promised them that He would “open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand” (Deuteronomy 28:12). Yet, if they disobeyed, He would “change the rain of your land to powder and dust” (v. 24). Rain is the lifeblood of the earth, and it flows only at His command and within the scope of His will.

As a generous God, “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). Yet a time is coming when those nations who will not accept the rule of His reigning Christ and who fail to send their people to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem will not taste the blessing of rain until they repent and yield to Him (Zechariah 14:17).

Until that future time, rain showers will continue to arrive unexpectedly and cause the occasional unwelcome change of plans—perhaps a picnic ended abruptly as participants seek shelter, or a ballgame canceled just as players are about to take the field. But the next time that happens, perhaps we can step back a bit and consider what a wonder it is to live on a planet where life-giving water is so abundant that it falls from the sky. And perhaps, too, we can say a quick prayer to our merciful Creator for the blessing of rain.

—Wallace G. Smith



“Megadrought” Across Western United States?

In the year 2000, “the Western U.S. entered the beginning of what scientists call a megadrought—the second worst in 1,200 years” (*CBS News*, April 12, 2021). Today, 60 percent of the U.S. Western states are in severe, extreme, or exceptional drought—conditions that extend even into the Pacific Northwest. “Lake Powell [which provides water to California, Nevada, and Arizona] is within just a few feet of its lowest level ever observed since it was first filled.... California’s reservoirs are 50 percent lower than they should be at this time of year” (*Forbes*, June 3, 2021).

Experts know this region is prone to drought, but the present conditions are unusual. “Areas that might have normally gone a few weeks without rain may now go a few months without a drop. In the mountains, more precipitation falls as rain rather than snow, decreasing snowpack. Even a decent snowpack melts faster now, making it harder to manage water supplies. And soils and vegetation lose more moisture as temperatures rise” (*New York Times*, June 4, 2021).

Farmers in California’s Central Valley grow significant quantities of nuts, citrus, and berries. The area

around Phoenix, Arizona, supplies a great deal of cotton. Yet, because of extreme drought, some local governments have told farmers not to plant rather than to waste water on crops destined to fail. Biblical prophecies warn Israelite-descended nations that, if they turn from God, He “will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze” (Leviticus 26:19). However, if they obey God, He “will give you rain in its season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last till the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last till the time of sowing” (vv. 4–5). Though there are worse days ahead, the time is coming when such drought conditions will be gone forever.



Russia Disconnecting from U.S. Dollar

Russia and other nations around the globe are working to disconnect themselves from the dollar. The United States dollar, or “greenback,” has been a powerful element of the nation’s global hegemony for more than a century. Nations that trade in U.S. dollars keep the currency strong and experience greater American influence in their economic affairs, while helping to keep the American standard of living high. So it is significant that Russia now plans to remove the currency from its National Wealth Fund, replacing U.S. dollar holdings with the euro, the Chinese yuan, and gold (*Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2021).

The U.S. recently imposed sanctions on Russia for its ongoing computer hacking attacks and interference in last year’s presidential election; Moscow views decoupling from the dollar as a way to reduce the sting of sanctions now and in the future. The nation has converted large quantities of its dollar reserves into other currencies and has sold many of its U.S. Treasury bonds. Though it continues to sell a significant amount of its oil in dollars, it is working to change that practice.

As more nations around the globe move to distance themselves from the dollar, American influence over international markets will diminish, and many experts now say that the standard of living in the U.S. is poised to decline. Biblical prophecy reveals that the power and influence of the U.S. and other Israelite-descended nations will decrease, even as the power and influence of other nations increases (Deuteronomy 28:33). God warned that because of their rejection of Him, He will “break the pride” of the power of the Israelite nations (Leviticus 26:19)—and the dollar is a major element of American pride and power. The decline of its dollar on the world stage is just one of many ways the U.S. may be humbled.

Franco-German Relations Faltering

France and Germany have functioned as the leading nations of the European Union for more than a decade. Each nation contributes significant financial resources to the EU. But a recent article in *German Foreign Policy* observed, “Merkel’s last Franco-German Ministerial Council meeting feigns harmonious relations. Yet Merkel had successively increased Berlin’s predominance over Paris.” In recent years, the gulf between the two nations has widened.

In 2010, German-led fiscal austerity was adopted by the EU, despite “fierce French resistance.” This led to a growing economic gap between the two nations, with Germany far outproducing France. Germany also worked to weaken French influence in the Union for the Mediterranean, an organization of nations France had hoped to use to balance growing German influence in Europe. To

add insult to injury, France is being blamed for the failing intervention in Mali, where both France and Germany have been struggling to enforce peace. The nations are also at odds as tension grows over a sixth-generation Euro fighter jet. Overall, the relationship between France and Germany is weak and continues to deteriorate.

Biblical prophecy reveals that Germany, not France, will lead Europe at the end of this age. The German-led “king of the North” will eventually become heavily involved in the Holy Land and closely tied to the Roman Catholic church. Biblical prophecy does not identify France as a major player in Europe’s end-time future. Where exactly France will fit into a final configuration of nations or kingdoms in Europe remains to be seen, but Scripture is clear that Germany will be at the helm.

Tobacco: The Killer Many Ignore

As of August 31 this year, more than 4.5 million COVID-19-related deaths have been officially reported worldwide since the pandemic began. The virus has held the world hostage for nearly



two years. But do you know what *legal*, deadly, disease-causing agent killed nearly eight million people in 2019 alone? If you guessed cigarettes, you are right. In 2019, more than 1.1 billion people were smokers, and that number had increased by 150 million—equal to almost half the population of the United States—in just the previous nine years.

Cigarette smoking plagues people of all ages, races, and nationalities. The vast majority of smokers—89 percent—start smoking by age 25. After that, few seem interested in adopting this deadly habit. In May, *The Guardian* reported that two thirds of global smokers

live in just ten nations: China, India, Indonesia, the U.S., Russia, Bangladesh, Japan, Turkey, Vietnam, and the Philippines. In fact, one in three tobacco smokers—more than 340 million people—live in China. Smoking is a killer: 80–90 percent of lung cancer deaths in the U.S. are linked to smoking ([CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)).

Cigarettes are a unique product that, even when used as directed, will likely kill two thirds of their users. Cigarettes are scientifically designed to addict smokers, turning them into clients for life. Cigarettes subject the vast majority of smokers to a variety of illnesses and increase the risk of death from various diseases. Yet the Bible instructs us to maintain our health because our bodies are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19). In fact, Scripture tells us that we “were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (v. 20). Not only are cigarettes deadly, they are also a substance that many turn to for an artificial sense of peace, stress relief, and security. Sadly, in our societies today, this deadly habit that destroys our God-given bodies is widely accepted as normal and even as an individual’s right.

Benefits of Eating Together

Many parents know that family meals play an important role in producing healthier children. Numerous studies show that “kids who eat with their families do better in school and have bigger vocabularies. They also have lower rates of depression, anxiety and eating disorders, as well as healthier diets and better cardiovascular health” (*The Conversation*, April 30, 2021). Recent research reveals that eating together, with children or others, also benefits adults. Adults who eat with others instead of eating alone tend to eat more fruits and vegetables and less fast food. They eat smaller portions and eat more slowly, contributing to better health. Additionally, studies find that people who eat alone while watching TV have an increased risk for obesity.

By contrast, parents who regularly eat with their children “reported higher levels of family functioning, greater self-esteem and lower levels of depressive symptoms and stress.” Another study of parents with infants and toddlers found that “couples who attached more meaning and importance to family meals were more satisfied with their marital relationship.”

Jesus often ate with His disciples (Mark 14:17–18; John 21:10–12). The Bible instructs parents to teach their children “when you sit in your house” (Deuteronomy 6:7) and notes that the first Christians took advantage of opportunities to get together and enjoy meals with each other (Acts 2:42, 46). Eating meals together is a wonderful way to follow those good examples—especially during this time of social isolation due to the pandemic. TW

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LETTERS TO TW

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK



Dear Gerald E. Weston: Please excuse my handwriting. My computer is not working at the present time. However, I felt that I needed to write to you regarding my subscription to *Tomorrow's World*. Your magazine is greatly appreciated and is very timely with current world events. I read it from cover to cover. This is what every person needs to read to understand what the Bible says about the time we're living in. Things and events change rapidly. I also want to thank your staff for their input and articles. Keep up the good work you are doing.

—Subscriber in Colorado

Incredible show today [referring to the *Tomorrow's World* telecast "Cold War Secrets Revealed!"] and the study guide offered, along with the topic, was just astounding. We came so close to a massive missile strike from the U.S. It stands to reason the Soviets (at that time) would have retaliated—logically, Britain, France, and Israel would have also fired their missiles. The Israelis would have wiped out the Muslim world. Please send me that study guide, *Armageddon and Beyond*. Those stories would be a great read too.

—Viewer in Australia

I appreciate the *Tomorrow's World* magazine. I think you should be a man if you are a man and be a woman if you are a woman. It is a slap in God's face what is happening. There is no right or wrong anymore in the world. Thank you, Mr. Weston, for your letter to subscribers regarding this.

—Subscriber in Michigan

I have really appreciated the letters and magazines, which we have been receiving for some time now. You are not afraid to "tread where angels fear to go" and open up the page on topics often hidden and put aside.

—Subscriber in Australia

Will you please stop disrespecting our Roman and Byzantine Catholic Church? We do not condemn your Protestant churches. Please respect our Lord and Savior's one true holy apostolic church founded by Christ himself making Peter/Petrus the first pope. The holy mass is 100% biblically based.

—Subscriber in Ohio

Editor's Note: Our goal is not to show anyone disrespect—rather, we believe in preaching the truth and letting people decide for themselves. The fact is that Jesus did not make Peter the first pope and that many of the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic church are unscriptural. In fact, the Living Church of God, sponsor of this magazine, is neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant! If you are interested in tracing the history of the true, biblical Church of God from its founding to the present day, we recommend our free booklet *God's Church Through the Ages*. It is available online at our website or from any of the Regional Offices listed on page 4 of this issue.

God willing, your publications have helped turn my life around. I so look forward to everything I receive in my mail pertaining to the word of God.

—Subscriber in Kansas

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St. Michael CBC 8 SU 2:00 p.m.

JAMAICA

Kingston TVJ SU 7:00 a.m.

NEW ZEALAND

Nationwide TVNZ2 TH 9:30 a.m.
Nationwide TVNZ2 +1 TH 10:30 a.m.

PHILIPPINES

Nationwide TV5 MO 11:30 p.m.

SOUTH AFRICA

Nationwide CTV/SA SU 11:00 a.m.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Nationwide CNC3-TV SU 8:00 a.m.

UK & NW EUROPE

WORD (TWN) Sky TV 590 SU 11:00 a.m.
Sky TV 590 SU 12:30 a.m.
Sky TV 590 FR 12:00 a.m.



CANADA

Nationwide Networks (All times Eastern)

Vision SA 3:30 a.m.

The Cowboy Channel SU 8:00 a.m.

FAITH TV SU 5:30 p.m.
MO-FR 10:30 p.m.
TU 5:00 p.m.

CHNU MO-FR 10:00 p.m.

CTV (Maritimes) SU 7:30 a.m.

CTV (Alberta) SU 1:30 p.m.

V-Télé (en français) SU 6:30 a.m.

UNITED STATES

Nationwide Networks (All times Eastern)

The CW Plus SU 8:00 a.m.
MO 2:00 a.m.

FOLK TV SU 9:00 a.m.

getTV SU 7:00 a.m.

Impact TV SU 11:00 p.m.
MO 10:30 p.m.

NewsNation (formerly WGN) SU 6:00 a.m.
WE 6:00 a.m.

The Word Network SU 6:00 a.m.
SU 7:30 p.m.
FR 7:00 p.m.

The Walk TV SU 10:30 a.m.

Z Living SU 7:30 a.m.

DISH Network* (All times Eastern)

Impact Ch. 268 SU 11:00 p.m.

DIRECTV* (All times Eastern)

Word Ch. 373 SU 6:00 a.m.
SU 7:30 p.m.
FR 7:00 p.m.

For the most up-to-date listings please go to:

TomorrowsWorld.org/tune-in

AK Anchorage KYUR SU 6:00 a.m.

Fairbanks KATN SU 7:00 a.m.

Juneau KJUD SU 6:00 a.m.

AL Birmingham WABM SU 10:00 a.m.

Dothan WTVY (CW) SU 7:00 a.m.

Huntsville WHDF SU 7:30 a.m.

Montgomery WAMY SU 9:30 a.m.

Opelika WBMM (CW) SU 7:00 a.m.

WLTZ SU 7:30 a.m.

AR El Dorado KNOE SU 7:00 a.m.

Fayetteville KHOG SU 7:00 a.m.

Fort Smith KHBS SU 7:00 a.m.

Jonesboro KAIT SU 7:00 a.m.

AZ Tucson KMSB SU 8:30 a.m.

Yuma KEYC (CW) SU 9:00 a.m.

CA Bakersfield KGET (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Chico KHSL (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

El Centro KEYC (CW) SU 9:00 a.m.

Eureka KECA-LD/KVIQ (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Monterey KION (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Palm Springs KCWQ (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Salinas KION (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

San Luis Obispo KSBY (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Santa Barbara KSBY (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Santa Maria KSBY (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

CO Colorado Springs KXTU SU 10:30 a.m.

Denver KWGN-TV 2 SU 9:30 a.m.

Grand Junc. KJCT (CW) SU 7:00 a.m.

CT Hartford WWLP (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

DC Washington DC WDCA SU 7:30 a.m.

DE Harrington WMDT (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

FL Gainesville WCJB (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Jacksonville WCWJ SU 6:30 a.m.

Miami WBFS SU 6:30 a.m.

Ft. Lauderdale WBFS SU 6:30 a.m.

Gainesville WCJB SU 6:00 a.m.

Panama City WJHG (CW) SU 7:00 a.m.

Tallahassee WTLF SU 8:00 a.m.

Tampa Bay WTOG SU 8:00 a.m.

GA Albany WALB (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Albany WALB SU 11:00 a.m.

Augusta WAGT (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Columbus WLTX SU 7:30 a.m.

Thomasville WTLF (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

IA Cedar Rapids MCRG-DT 9.3 SU 9:00 a.m.

Des Moines KCWI SU 7:00 a.m.

ID Boise KYUU SU 7:00 a.m.

Idaho Falls KIFI SU 7:00 a.m.

IL Chicago WJYS SU 8:00 a.m.

Moline MO 5:00 p.m.

Peoria WHOI SU 7:00 a.m.

Quincy WGEM SU 7:00 a.m.

Springfield Insight TU 5:00 a.m.

Springfield Insight TU 1:00 p.m.

IN Fort Wayne WPTA SU 7:30 a.m.

Fort Wayne Comcast SU 9:00 a.m.

KS Parsons TWPAP WE 7:00 p.m.

Wichita KSCW-TV 33 SU 11:00 a.m.

KY Bowling Green WBKO SU 7:00 a.m.

Latonia PEG WE 6:30 p.m.

Latonia PEG TH 10:00 p.m.

Lexington WTVQ SU 7:00 a.m.

Louisville Insight Various

WBNA SU 9:30 a.m.

LA Alexandria KBCA SU 7:00 a.m.

Alexandria KLAB SU 9:30 a.m.

Baton Rouge WBRZ SU 10:00 a.m.

Lafayette KATC SU 7:00 a.m.

Lake Charles KVHP SU 9:30 a.m.

Monroe KNOE SU 7:00 a.m.

New Orleans WNOL SU 10:00 a.m.

Shreveport KSHV SU 6:00 a.m.

West Monroe KMCT SU 11:00 a.m.

MA Malden Access SU 9:00 a.m.

MD Baltimore Community SU 10:00 a.m.

Westminster Adelphia TH 10:00 a.m.

Westminster Adelphia FR 10:00 a.m.

ME Bangor WABI SU 8:00 a.m.

Brunswick TV3 SA 8:30 a.m.

Brunswick TV3 SU 6:30 a.m.

Presque Isle WBQP SU 8:00 a.m.

MI Alpena WBAE SU 8:00 a.m.

Lansing WLAJ SU 11:00 a.m.

Marquette WBKP SU 8:00 a.m.

MN Cloquet MEDCLO SU 8:00 a.m.

Duluth KDHL SU 7:00 a.m.

Minneapolis MTN TH 12:00 a.m.

Minneapolis NWCT SA 10:30 p.m.

Minneapolis NWCT SU 4:30 a.m.

Minneapolis NWCT SU 10:30 a.m.

Rochester KTTC SU 7:00 a.m.

Roseville CTV WE 4:00 a.m.

Roseville CTV WE 12:00 p.m.

St. Paul Nhd. Network SU 8:30 p.m.

MO Columbia KOMU SU 7:00 a.m.

Joplin KFJX SU 8:30 a.m.

Kansas City KCWE SU 7:30 a.m.

St. Louis KPLR MO 6:30 a.m.

MS Biloxi WXXV SU 7:00 a.m.

Columbus WDCB SU 7:00 a.m.

Greenwood WBWO SU 7:00 a.m.

Jackson Spectrum SU 10:00 a.m.

Jackson Spectrum WE 4:00 p.m.

Jackson Spectrum SU 7:00 a.m.

Meridian WTK SU 7:00 a.m.

MT Billings KTVQ SU 7:00 a.m.

Butte KBZK SU 7:00 a.m.

Butte KXLF SU 7:00 a.m.

Glendive KWZB SU 7:00 a.m.

Great Falls KRTV SU 7:00 a.m.

Helena KMTF SU 7:00 a.m.

Missoula KPAX SU 7:00 a.m.

NC Charlotte WAXN SU 9:00 a.m.

Charlotte WMYT SU 8:30 a.m.

Greenville WNCN SU 8:00 a.m.

Hickory WHKY MO 7:30 p.m.

Raleigh WRAZ SU 7:30 a.m.

NM Albuquerque KWBO SU 8:00 a.m.

Albuquerque KCHF MO 7:30 p.m.

Albuquerque KCHF FR 9:00 p.m.

Albuquerque KCHF MO 7:30 a.m.

Santa Fe KCHF FR 9:00 p.m.

NV Reno KREN SU 8:00 a.m.

NY Albany-Troy Spectrum MO 3:00 p.m.

Binghamton Spectrum WE 10:00 p.m.

Binghamton Spectrum FR 8:00 p.m.

Binghamton WBNG SU 8:00 a.m.

Brooklyn BCAT MO 4:30 p.m.

Canandaigua Finger Lakes SU 11:30 a.m.

Elmira WENY SU 8:00 a.m.

Oneida Access TH 2:00 p.m.

Oneida Access TH 7:00 p.m.

Queens Public Access MO 11:00 p.m.

Queens Public Access TU 4:30 p.m.

Riverhead Cablevision SU 7:00 p.m.

Rochester Finger Lakes SU 7:00 a.m.

OH Cincinnati WSTR SU 9:00 a.m.

Cincinnati Spectrum TH 8:30 a.m.

Cincinnati Spectrum SU 11:30 a.m.

Cincinnati Spectrum TU 1:00 p.m.

Cleveland WUAB SU 8:30 a.m.

Fairborn CAC TU 12:00 p.m.

Lima WBOH SU 7:00 a.m.

Lima WBOH MO 7:00 a.m.

OK Ada KTEN SU 7:00 a.m.

Lawton KAUZ SU 7:00 a.m.

Tulsa KOCW SU 8:00 a.m.

OR Bend KTVZ SU 8:00 a.m.

Eugene KMTR SU 8:00 a.m.

SU 8:00 a.m.

SU 11:00 a.m.

SU 8:00 a.m.

SU 8:00 a.m.

TH 12:00 a.m.

SA 10:30 p.m.

SU 4:30 a.m.

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Medford KTVL SU 8:00 a.m.

Portland Community SU 12:30 p.m.

PA Erie WSEE SU 8:00 a.m.

Johnstown Atl. Broadband MO 10:00 p.m.

Philadelphia WPSG SU 7:30 a.m.

SC Charleston WCBT SU 8:00 a.m.

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The Greatest Friend of All

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