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The Rise of the Asian Dragon

How do China's amazing transformation and increasing global power fit into prophesied end-time events?

by Rod Hall

During his recent trip to Asia, American President Barack Obama declared, "The fortunes of America and the Asia Pacific have become more closely linked than ever before." He "singled out China as a primary engine for sustaining the world's economic recovery" and welcomed "Beijing's greater role on the world stage" ("In Japan, Obama Stresses Asia's Role in U.S. Economy," *Washington Post*, Nov. 14, 2009).

China's greater global influence has led many analysts to predict that China will rival the United States as a global superpower by 2020. China's amazing transformation to greater economic, political and military influence over the past three decades is astounding and may have far-reaching effects on how events leading to Christ's return play out.

Transitioning to global power?

The Asian dragon is a symbol of power and strength often used in the West as a national emblem of China. I visited this fascinating country in 1984 as anchor for an ABC affiliate television documentary, *A Glimpse of China Today*. China was just beginning to emerge economically and politically from its long isolation. At that time, six years had passed since the introduction of market reforms by the Chinese Communist Party. American President Ronald Reagan visited China earlier the same year, being the third consecutive president to do so.



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The Asian dragon is a symbol of power and strength often used as an emblem of China.

In interviews with street merchants, many of them peasants, it was clear that a new wave of economic reform was taking hold, allowing some entrepreneurs to carve out a new way of life. A small middle class was beginning to emerge as China's access to the outside world began to transform the 5,000-year-old civilization.

The question remained, Could China rise to become a major power? Throughout much of its history China's enormous population, land mass and political influence made it the center of gravity in world affairs unequaled by any other nation in the region.

China's dominance ended after two millennia as a result of the dynasties' gradual weakening, lack of technological innovation and defeat in the Anglo-Chinese (or Opium) Wars of the 19th
(See "ASIAN DRAGON," page 3)



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Managing editor: Darris McNeely

Senior editors: Cecil E. Maranville, Melvin Rhodes, Robin Webber

Contributing editor: John Ross Schroeder
Senior writer: Paul Kieffer

Copy editors: Mike Bennett, Doug Johnson
Proofreaders: Becky Bennett, Debbie Pennington
Layout/design: Elizabeth Cannon, Peter Eddington

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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Springtime in Israel

A friend of mine is planning a trip to Israel next spring. I told him it would be a good idea to take out trip insurance. The Middle East is always a volatile place, and you never know when a skirmish could erupt into a war—canceling all tourist travel. What I am reading of late shows trip insurance might be wise.

Iran is getting closer to having a viable nuclear weapon capable of reaching Israel and Western nations. Negotiations to curb Iran's project are proving fruitless. Iran is steadily advancing to the day it will become a nuclear power. This day is coming, probably sooner rather than later.

The nation of Israel knows that when this day arrives, their existence is in grave danger. Iran has threatened to wipe the Jewish state from the face of the earth, and Israel believes Iran means what it says.

The question is, Will Israel take preemptive military action to destroy Iran's nuclear production capacity? The Israeli air force took such action once before when it attacked an Iraqi facility suspected of building a nuclear bomb. The Israelis have shown the will before. Whether they have the sustained ability is another issue.

There is one power that does have the ability to wipe out the Iranian facilities. It is the United States of America. A few days of shock-and-awe bombing like that unleashed on Iraq in 2003 could do the job. Does America have the will to attack Iran? Many suspect it doesn't.

So, if diplomatic talk fails, and it appears it will, then Israel could feel it has no choice but to launch an attack to preserve its existence. The results would be catastrophic. Iran would launch terrorist attacks on Western targets and possibly hinder the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. The impact on the world economy, still struggling to come out of recession, would be significant.

All this could occur next spring, which is why I told my friend it would be a good idea to take out trip insurance in case his long-awaited journey is called off. It would be nice if we could take out insurance policies to guard against every risk and contingency in our dangerous and complicated world. But we can't. All the reports indicate a dangerous road imminently ahead for the Middle East.

Is there another type of "insurance" we can procure for the dangerous times that lie ahead? Yes, there is, but it is not underwritten by any mortal agency. Jesus Christ indicated that the only available refuge would be provided by understanding what is coming and making sure our lives are aligned with God's way of life.

Luke 19 records Jesus' words as He approached the city of Jerusalem. "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation'" (verses 41-44).

We can know the things that make for our "peace" in this, our "time of visitation." They are revealed through the teachings of Christ. God can be as near as your next prayer. It is the best form of "insurance" we can take out during our journey in this life.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“ASIAN DRAGON” (Continued from page 1)
century. “In fact, China was the largest economy for much of recorded history... In 1820 it still accounted for 30% of world GDP [Gross Domestic Product]” (“A Survey of the World Economy—the Real Great Leap Forward,” *The Economist*, Oct. 2, 2004, p. 5).

The long march from Marxism

Chairman Mao Tse-tung led the Communists to power in 1949 and brought the country into isolationism. After his death in 1976, China chose new leadership with a new formula for strengthening the country for the modern world. Veteran politician Deng Xiaoping became chairman in 1981 and implemented changes that decoupled the economy from politics, allowing a command economy controlled by the government to transform into a market-based economy where free enterprise could take root.

Upon Den Xiaopeng’s death in 1997, *The Washington Post* commented, “Deng had guided the country out of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, flung open China’s doors to the outside world and loosened the grip of central economic planning while insisting that the Communist Party’s monopoly on power go unchallenged” (“China’s Deng Xiaoping Is Dead at 92,” Feb. 20, 1997).

Technological advances and manufacturing skills quickly developed. Politically, however, China remained under the tight control of the Communist Party, as the crushing of the 1989 Tiananmen Square student uprising demonstrated.

In 1995 I hosted a delegation of Chinese officials, including several political leaders from the manufacturing area just outside Shanghai. They toured American manufacturing facilities looking for new ideas and technologies. Over the next decade and a half, hundreds of similar groups traveled the world and used many other means to advance the manufacturing and technological capabilities of the Chinese industrial complex.

In 1996 China launched three nuclear-capable M-9 missiles toward Taiwan, increasing tensions with Taiwan’s American ally and reinforcing



Reuters/Eliseo Fernandez

China has the world’s second largest navy and the largest standing armed forces with over 2.25 million troops.

ing China’s growing military power and nuclear weapons capability. In 2007 China again showed its growing sophistication by launching an antisatellite missile, destroying a satellite in space. They have also launched two- and three-man crews into orbit.

In 1997, after 156 years of British rule, Hong Kong was handed over to Beijing’s Communist leaders. They began the tricky task of managing one of the world’s most sophisticated modern economies and 6 million people who were immersed in capitalism.

Today, China’s growing urbanization, gargantuan global manufacturing operation, technological advancement and major military spending and output position it for growing global influence.

Growing economic influence

“China’s population of 1.3 billion makes it the most populous nation on earth with a fifth of the world’s people. It is estimated that by 2025, China will have the world’s largest middle class” (*Foreign Policy*, March/April 2008).

China’s high growth rate, low labor costs and a huge emerging market have attracted the world’s highest levels of direct foreign investment.

“Over the past 20 years, China has made an unprecedented leap from being the world’s tenth-biggest economy to becoming number two. Its GDP has increased by an average of almost 10% a year for the past 30 years” (Pam

Woodall, *The World in 2010*, 2009). In 2010 “its exports will reach 10% of world trade” (ibid.). It has \$1.5 trillion in reserves, is the largest holder of U.S. government debt and is America’s second-largest trading partner.

China’s economy will likely grow by 8.3 percent in 2009 and 10.9 percent in 2010, while the world economy will grow by just 3.3 percent in 2010. China’s economy could overtake the United States in less than 20 years (“Crisis Speeds BRIC Rise to Power,” Reuters, June 2009).

Military power

China has the world’s second largest navy and the largest standing armed forces with over 2.25 million troops. They have integrated former Soviet weapons technology with advanced Western manufacturing.

China recently became the world’s second biggest military spender behind the United States. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, “China is continuing to acquire both domestic and foreign arms as it seeks to equip its armed forces for conditions of modern ‘informationalized’ warfare” (Nov. 7, 2009). China employs sophisticated precision weapons, high-tech information and communications technology. While global arms spending rose 4 percent in 2008, China’s grew by 10 percent to an estimated \$84.9 billion.

The Center for Security Studies (CSS) reported, "According to official sources, defense spending has increased by an inflation-adjusted 300 percent over the past decade" ("The Rise of China: Regional and Global Power Shifts," CSS Analyses in Security Policy, February 2007).

Christopher Foss, editor of *Jane's Armour and Artillery*, was recently quoted in London's *Telegraph*: "China is a highly manoeuvrable force able to operate anywhere as good if not better than Western armies" ("China Aims for Military Might," Sept. 28, 2009). By 2015 China will likely possess six Jin-class submarines with the capacity "of firing the JL2 ballistic nuclear missile that could threaten both the western and eastern American seaboard" (ibid., emphasis added). *The Economist* reports that China "has a few dozen land-based nuclear missiles capable of hitting some or all parts of America" ("Overkill," Oct. 22, 2009).

International influence

China's need for fuel and other natural resources has increased its interest in creating international relationships. It is the world's second largest consumer of oil (following America), with proven oil reserves of about half that of the United States ("BP Statistical Review of World Energy," June 2009).

China began importing oil in 1993 and "by 2025, imports will account for 75 percent of China's oil consumption" (China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, October 2007). "In 15 years, China is expected to surpass the US as the world's largest spender on oil and natural gas" ("ExxonMobil to Boost Mainland Sales," *China Daily*, Nov. 12, 2009).

The largest source of China's oil is the Middle East, providing about half of its needs (U.S. Government Energy Information Administration, July 2009). This growing dependency has led to investing in energy in several countries in the region including Sudan, Iran and Syria. It is a favored trading partner and established the China-Arab Cooperation Forum to build closer relationships. It negotiates with the Gulf Cooperation Council members. Its recent energy deal with

Tehran for \$100 billion was harshly criticized by the United States (CSS Analyses in Security Policy).

What happens in China today is critical to the future of our world. China's amazing economic, political and military transformation over the past three decades is astounding and will likely have far-reaching effects on the end-time events leading to Christ's return.

End-time events

The Bible reveals that at the time of the end, during the Great Tribulation, the world will be dominated by a commercial, political and military union of 10 kings that combine power with the "beast" for a short period of time (Revelation 17:12-14).

The prophet Daniel refers to this power as the king of the North (Daniel 11:40). He will sweep down with major military force, occupying Jerusalem and much of the Middle East in response to aggressive actions by the king of the South (verses 40-43). "But news from the *east* and the *north* [of Jerusalem] shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to *destroy and annihilate many*" (verse 44, emphasis added throughout).

Revelation 9:13-19 reveals that a massive 200-million-man army will arise from the region east of the Euphrates River. They are prepared for battle and ride on what the author John describes as horses with heads like lions that spew out fire, smoke and brimstone. "By these three plagues *a third of mankind was killed*" (verse 18).

This appears to be John's best effort to describe the modern warfare he was seeing in vision. The description given and the massive numbers of deaths may indicate the use of modern weapons of mass destruction (verse 19).

At the time John wrote, the eastern border of the Roman Empire was the Euphrates River, which begins in Turkey and bisects Syria and Iraq before emptying into the Persian Gulf. The countries involved with the kings of the North and South are located west of this river. From where does this massive army of the East arise?

Currently China is the major power east of Jerusalem. It has the capacity to

form the nucleus of a massive army, has the fastest growing economy, spends a large percentage of its annual GDP on the military and possesses nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. In addition, it is creating close ties with other Asian nations as well as many in the Middle East.

It is also possible that a multinational Islamic force from countries along or to the north and east of the Euphrates will join forces. This could include nations like Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. India has the world's second-largest Muslim population, even though most of its citizens are Hindus.

A regional threat could provoke some or all of these nations to come together to fight a common foe. The aggressive military actions of the king of the North could rally them to form a massive counterforce. Even a threat to the Persian Gulf oil supply, upon which many Asian nations rely, could provoke a military response.

These events are followed by a continued buildup of the eastern powers as we see in Revelation 16:12: "Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the *kings from the east* might be prepared." Notice more than one king is involved.

This may be a second phase of the overall operation begun earlier at the blowing of the sixth of the "seven trumpets" (Revelation 8:6; 9:13-21). The trumpets are followed by the "seven last plagues" or "seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God" (15:1, 7), the sixth of which includes the drying up the Euphrates (16:12). Each of these bowls of wrath appear to fall quickly one after another as the Great Tribulation comes to a close and armies of the kings of the "whole world" gather at Armageddon (verses 14-16) before they battle the returning Jesus Christ at Jerusalem 55 miles south (19:17-21; Joel 3:9-14).

For more information on the trumpets and last plagues of Revelation, request or download *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* at WNPonline.org. For an overview of the grand sweep of prophecy, also request or download *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. ❖

“Mr. Gorbachev, Tear Down This Wall”

This historic demand, delivered by U.S. President Ronald Reagan in front of Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate on June 12, 1987, came to symbolize the Eastern European revolt against Communist slavery in 1989. Nearly 2½ years after the president’s epochal visit, the Berlin Wall collapsed on Nov. 9, 1989. What are the prophetic implications indicated in God’s Word?

by John Ross Schroeder

June 12, 1987, turned out to be a warm spring afternoon in the then divided city of Berlin. The ugly Berlin Wall stood in the background as the articulate speaker delivered his stark public message to the Soviet leader. Armed East German border guards watched from military installations embedded in the wall itself. Crowds on the Eastern side, hoping to hear the president’s speech by loudspeaker, were cruelly forced to back away from the Berlin Wall.

In the first part of his speech, Ronald Reagan reviewed previous visits by American presidents, particularly the memorable words of John F. Kennedy, “*Ich bin ein Berliner*” (I am a Berliner), uttered only a few months before his tragic assassination on Nov. 22, 1963. President Kennedy meant that “as a free man,” he stood together with West Berliners in their struggle to secure their freedom against Communist aggression. During that speech he predicted that the Berlin Wall would come down.

Some 25 years later, President Reagan delivered his stark demand to the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, “*Tear down this wall.*” The detailed history behind these fateful four words is well worth recounting.

Doing battle over four words

The West German government invited President Reagan to come to Berlin to help celebrate the historic city’s 750th anniversary. White House speechwriter Peter Robinson was asked to write a speech for the president about foreign policy. His final draft, including the phrase

“tear down this wall,” was reviewed by the National Security Council and the State Department. Both of these government bodies strongly disapproved of the four-word phrase.

Evaluations like “needlessly provocative” quickly emerged. One diplomat suggested an alternative phrase: “One day this ugly wall will disappear.” Speechwriter Robinson reacted privately with, “One day, perhaps pigs will fly.”

This momentous speech, defining President Reagan’s general approach to foreign affairs, survived seven different drafts. In fact, the heated battle over these four words continued all the way to Berlin. Kenneth Duberstein, the president’s deputy chief of staff, accompanied him in the limousine on the way to the Berlin Wall. During this journey, Ronald Reagan finally said: “So, Ken, I am the president.” “Yes, sir,” came the reply. “Well, Ken,” chuckled Mr. Reagan, “*Let’s just leave that line in.*”

The president told an assistant, also on the scene, “The boys at State [the Department] are going to kill me [figuratively], but it’s the right thing to do.”

Witnesses to history

Several authors and journalists who were witnesses to the historic fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 have recounted their own personal experiences in books, magazine articles and newspaper stories. I was dispatched to the scene by my bureau chief in England, accompanied by my daughter Stephanie acting as translator.

Twenty years later veteran writer Gerhard Marx persuaded me to accompany

Presidents of major countries sometimes use forceful words with remarkable effect—simple words like “tear down this wall.” God can also speak to humanity in forceful words about events that He has the divine power to bring to pass.

him to Berlin to cover the anniversary celebrations together. He spent his early youth in Germany during World War II, later immigrating to the United States and becoming an American citizen.

My colleague chose a hotel only a short walk from Checkpoint Charlie, the name given by the Western Allies to the most well-known Berlin crossing point between West and East during the Cold War. The site has become a tourist attraction, complete with a museum.

The Berlin Wall was constructed in 1961 to prevent East German citizens and some from other Warsaw Pact states from escaping to the West. The gates had already reopened slightly when Hungary opened its own border to fleeing Germans beginning in August 1989.

However, perhaps the defining movement that finally culminated in the wall's collapse in November began in the East German city of Leipzig, southwest of Berlin, with weekly prayer meetings in the Nikolai Church—followed by a peaceful march. In mid-October some 70,000 people in Leipzig marched peaceably through the city, unsure of whether the government would suppress these demonstrations. This public demonstration

for individual freedoms helped precipitate the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

A celebration of freedom

Some 30 heads of state (mainly from Europe) met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the Bellevue Palace on Nov. 9 for a celebration of freedom and then joined the public celebrations at the Brandenburg Gate.

American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also attended. (My colleague and I joined the exuberant crowds making their way to the Brandenburg Gate, where some 1,000 colorful domino stones were lined up to replicate the falling Berlin Wall two decades ago. Earlier young children were assigned to paint these stones in a variety of patterns and symbols.) This convergence of leaders was more European in nature than strictly German.

Somewhat in contrast, next year's 20-year festivities on Oct. 3, 2010, will concentrate on the reunification of West and East into one German state. Although this revolution for liberty really began earlier in the Polish shipyards under the leadership of Lech Walesa of *Solidarnosc* (Solidarity), the collapse of the Berlin Wall has captured the pub-

lic imagination, becoming the more lasting symbol of freedom.

The Velvet Revolution, the deliverance of Czechoslovakia (since divided into the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic), came later in that November of 1989, clearly an autumn of epochal change in Eastern Europe.

World interest will once again refocus on Germany with the coming reunification anniversary celebrations in October of 2010. Although it is wise to periodically remind ourselves of any major, significant event that has resulted in much improved liberty—and a better economic and political life for many millions—human unity itself does not always result in genuine freedom, lasting prosperity and happiness. History shows that unbridled, lawless “freedom” eventually brings tears and monumental suffering.

Always remember that God is the unseen witness to human events. Even if He decides not to directly intervene before or during any specific occurrence, the Bible shows that His will is the ultimate deciding factor in the outcome of these major geopolitical events. This is one of the most important themes of the book of Daniel.

I didn't hear anyone giving God any credit during these celebrations, though undoubtedly He was accorded thanksgiving in some German churches. Still, it seems few really con-



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sidered His role in these momentous events. At the very least, He allowed the Berlin Wall to fall. We should never think that He lacks the power to intervene in human affairs.

The Tower of Babel

This ancient tower depicted in the book of Genesis remains an important reminder. The Genesis account simply describes what humanity was up to some 4,000 years ago after rejecting God's guidance. "Come,... let us make a name for ourselves [a dubious motive], lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). God's previous instructions to Noah and the human family had been to populate the whole earth—not remain in one location (Genesis 9:1).

But humankind has generally chosen to rebel against the Creator's wishes beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Although the Almighty seems to generally refrain from intervening in human affairs, on this particular occasion He clearly did. He decided to nip this rebellion in the bud by taking an extreme measure—suddenly introducing many languages into the human configuration—thereby ensuring that humanity would carry out His will and scatter over the whole globe (Genesis 11:5-8).

God sees our future well in advance, and He knew that human ingenuity would move matters along faster than He wanted. "This is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose [imagine, King James Version] to do will be withheld from them" (verse 6, emphasis added throughout). Having made men and women in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27), our Creator has always understood the enormous ability and capacity of our human potential—both for good and for bad. Our first parents chose to imbibe of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The sovereignty of God

We hear a lot today about the sovereignty of various states. For instance, some farsighted political leaders in Britain fear any further



Reuters/Fabrizio Bensch

Giant domino pieces fall in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin Nov. 9, 2009, during celebrations to mark the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Berlin Wall was constructed in 1961 to prevent East German citizens and some from other Warsaw Pact states from escaping to the West.

loss of the nation's sovereignty to the European Union. But it is our Creator whom we should really fear. He remains in ultimate control of the destiny of nations and individuals (see Deuteronomy 32:7-8; Acts 17:26).

Presidents of major countries sometimes use forceful words with remarkable effect—simple words like "tear down this wall." God can also speak to humanity in forceful words about events that He has the divine power to bring to pass. Those words have been preserved in the Bible, sometimes in the first person.

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah quotes God Himself as saying: "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please... What I have said, that will

I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do" (Isaiah 46:9-11, New International Version).

A future European Union of 10 nations

We rightly applaud the freedoms now experienced by the peoples of former East Germany, Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics and other former Warsaw Pact nations in the East. Communist enslavement only brought poverty, atheism and a crushing of the human spirit.

But we should carefully look into God's prophetic Word, which tells us where Europe is ultimately headed. He has forecast a future union of 10 kings (or political entities) that will devastate the world and persecute Christians severely. For additional information, you may wish to request our free booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* ❖

The Anglo-Catholic Unity Conundrum: Consider the Future Implications

Why does the Roman Catholic Church now seek to recruit disenchanted Anglican priests and lay members? How will Pope Benedict's ostensibly generous offer ultimately affect Europe? How do these European religious movements fit into Bible prophecy?

by John Ross Schroeder

Unlike today's increasingly secular, multicultural Europe, the prophesied world superpower to come will be strongly undergirded and supported by a pervasive religious element.

A recent article in *The Catholic Herald* boldly stated: "For a long time, Anglicans faithful to Christ's teaching have been knocking nervously at Rome's door. Now it has swung open" ("The Pope Opens New Route to Christian Unity," Oct. 21, 2009). A pivotal papal decree opens the way for the Anglican priesthood to embrace Rome while enabling these priests to retain key aspects of their traditional liturgy and their wives. As *The Economist* reported, "The Vatican has already taken, following reordination, several dozen rebel Anglican priests, some of them married" ("Unleashing the Counter-Reformation," Oct. 24, 2009).

Why change churches?

Many traditional Anglicans have never been comfortable with the decision to admit women to the priesthood some 17 years ago. Neither has this wing of the Anglican Communion been pleased with the Church of England's (and its American Episcopal counterpart) ever-increasing tolerance of homosexuality.

But the question remains: How severely will this recent papal offer affect membership figures in the Anglican Church? How many adherents would it stand to lose? Bear in mind that the global Anglican Communion consists of about 77 million adherents. A *Guardian* article recently predicted that "tens of thousands of disaffected Anglicans could become Roman Catholics following a decree made today by Pope Benedict to poach whole Protestant communities for the church for the first time since the [Protestant] Reformation" ("Pope Opens Gates to Anglicans Disaffected Over

Women Clergy," Oct. 20, 2009, emphasis added throughout).

The Economist adds: "Some think (or fear) that as many as one in seven Church of England priests could convert." On the other hand, Melanie McDonagh in *The London Evening Standard* estimated, "Perhaps a few dozen parishes will do so, quite a number of them in London. It's not exactly going to be rolling back the Reformation" ("The Pope's Invitation to a Much Broader Church," Oct. 23, 2009).

Some question Rome's motives

Although the archbishop of Canterbury has reluctantly acceded to Pope Benedict's overtures to his flock, others have openly greeted this papal offer with a high degree of skepticism. Prominent among these is Hans Kung, the independent-minded Swiss Catholic theologian. He titled his critical article in *The Guardian*: "The Vatican Thirst for Power Divides Christianity and Damages Catholicism." Just below the title, the subheading stated, "The astonishing efforts to lure away Anglican priests show that *Pope Benedict is set on restoring the Roman Imperium*" (Oct. 27, 2009).

Hans Küng added in his article that the present pope "wants to preserve the medieval, centralistic Roman system for all ages... The old-fashioned call for a 'return to Rome' raises its ugly head again, this time through the conversion particularly of the priests, if possible, en masse" (ibid.).

Other insightful observers see these recent events in a somewhat different light. Noted British author A.N. Wilson, for instance, said the following: "The numbers of practicing Catholics in England is greater than

the number of practicing Anglicans. Within a generation, there will probably be more Muslims than practicing Anglicans in the British Isles... *Britain has gone through a truly prodigious change in the last 30 years.* It has moved from being a largely white culture with Christianity as its background religion *to being a completely secular, multicultural society*" ("Rock of Ages, Cleft by the Pope," *International Herald Tribune*, Oct. 24, 2009).

For a limited period of time, Mr. Wilson's assessment may be essentially correct. But in the long run, Hans Küng's fears will ultimately be realized, big time.

The counter-reformation in prophecy

What *The Economist* called "The Pope's Power Grab" (Oct. 24) goes hand in hand with the increased secular power of the European Union, made possible by the Lisbon Treaty. A pivotal biblical prophecy deals with a final revival of the ancient Roman Empire foretold in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The Bible prophesies that a group of 10 "kings" or national leaders, through various alliances or other political arrangements, will give rise to a geopolitical union in Central Europe—eventually leading to the second coming of Jesus Christ and the end of this age of man.

The Hebrew prophet Daniel foretold future occurrences in Europe hundreds of years before the time of Christ. His prophecies were later complemented by the book of Revelation revealed to the apostle John near the end of the first century.

Unlike today's increasingly secular, multicultural Europe, this new world superpower will be strongly undergirded and supported by a pervasive religious element—aided and abetted by astounding but satanic miracles performed by a charismatic religious leader the Bible calls "the false prophet." He will even have the power to cause fire to "come down from heaven" (Revelation 13:13).

He will join hands with a charismatic secular leader the Bible calls "the beast." These two together will head a European superpower constituting the

final revival of the old Roman Empire. The whole world will fall under their spell and people will even worship this Beast power (verse 8)—a closely combined union of church and state. There will be *no* separation of powers as the United States and other nations now understand this concept. (To understand much more, request or download our free booklets *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.)

Those who mastermind this massive satanic deception to come will blaspheme the true God in heaven (verse 6). The true saints of God will be severely persecuted (verse 7). But where do these major events, apparently not so far ahead, leave us today? What is our awesome responsibility?

Coping with a counterfeit Christianity

Jesus Christ clearly stated: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name...and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5). Many people assume that those who bear the name "Christian" generally follow the beliefs, teachings and practices of Jesus Christ. But the New Testament clearly tells us that not everyone who accepts the name of Christ is really a true Christian.

Jesus foretold that many would claim His name but deny Him by their actions. He said such would "call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say" (Luke 6:46; compare Matthew 7:21). Christ and His apostles spoke of false prophets and false apostles. They revealed that two opposing, ostensibly Christian religions would emerge.



Reuters/Tony Gentile

Cardinal William Joseph Levada gestures during a news conference at the Vatican on Oct. 20, 2009. Pope Benedict has approved a document that would make it easier for Anglicans to join the Catholic Church.

One would be led by God's Holy Spirit and remain faithful to His teachings. The other would be guided by a different spirit of deception, accepting the name of Christ but twisting His teachings to create a convincing counterfeit that most people would fall for.

The New Testament presents a concise historical sketch of the roots of these two manifestations of Christianity—one true and one false. Christ's apostles depicted the origin of each and their fundamental characteristics. You need to understand what they are.

To know much more, request or download our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*. It is one of the most important booklets that we have ever published. Ask for your copy today. ❖

Could America Be Replaced as the Global Superpower?

Great powers come and go. For more than six decades the United States has been the world's dominant power. Seventy years ago, Great Britain—with its vast empire—was the world's greatest power. Could the United States follow Britain into decline and be replaced by another power? Are we seeing the first stages?

by Melvin Rhodes

The supremacy of first Britain with its empire and then the United States of America was prophesied for “the last days” (Genesis 49:1). But just as the British Empire collapsed due to debt and an overstretched military, so the United States faces the same problems today.

One of the consequences of the financial upheaval of the past 18 months, reported the U.S. newsmagazine *BusinessWeek*, is that Europe is now richer than North America. The accumulated national wealth of North Americans has dropped by 21.8 percent while Europe's only fell by 5.8 percent, “down to 22.2 trillion euros—a quarter of the globe's total wealth” (“Europe Now Richer Than North America,” *BusinessWeek*, Sept. 16, 2009).

As great wealth is necessary for global power, could Europe be on the verge of taking over from the United States?

Bible prophecy shows that a new, European-centered superpower will exist immediately before Jesus Christ's return. It will be a great commercial system whose trade dominates the world.

It's no coincidence that all 27 member countries of the European Union have signed the Lisbon Treaty, uniting Europe more than ever before with its own president and foreign minister jointly representing all member nations.

Its currency, the euro, is now valued at 1½ times the U.S. dollar and is used by more people. With over 500 million citizens, the EU is the world's biggest single market and by far the world's greatest trading power. Having now surpassed the United States in economic power, could it soon replace America as the world's foremost political and military power?

Lessons from a fallen empire

There's a lesson for the United States in the memory of some still living.

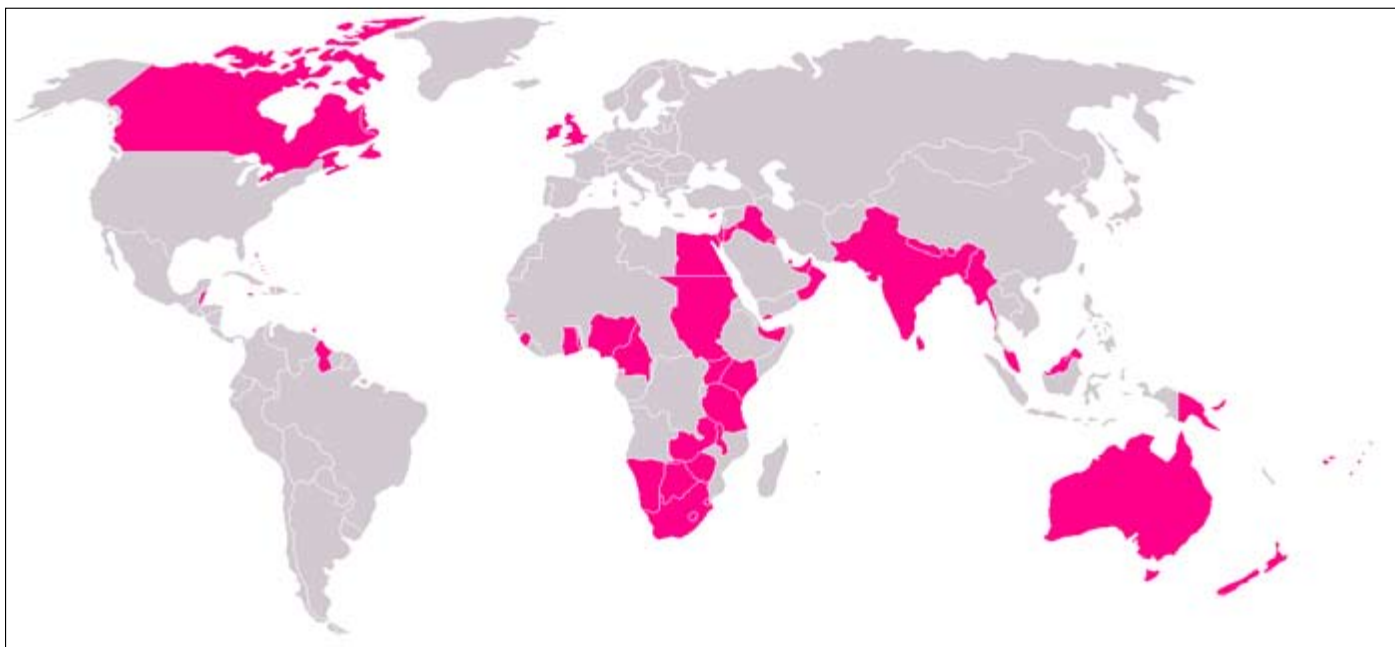
Few people alive today can remember a time when the world was dominated by the British, but that's the way things were prior to World War II. After fighting alone against the Third Reich for two years, the British were joined by the Soviet Union when Germany attacked them in June 1941. Another six months would pass before Pearl Harbor, which brought America into the war.

Americans expected that their boys would all return home after the war, just as they had done after World War I. U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt told British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin that American troops would leave Europe two years after the war's end. No one expected U.S. forces to stay longer. But American troops remain in Europe 65 years later!

What was the change that led American troops to remain in Europe?

Quite simply—*Britain was broke!* London was not able to return to the role it had held for two centuries, the task of policing the world. Such a role requires great wealth. After fighting two world wars in just over three decades, the British did not have the funds for foreign commitments and could no longer support their allies around the globe.

This wasn't something that was apparent immediately after the war ended in 1945. The British Empire



Wikimedia Commons

This map shows the extent of the British Empire in 1921. Few people alive today can remember a time when the world was dominated by the British, but that was the state of the world prior to World War II. British atlases showed a quarter of the earth either ruled by Britain or linked to it in the Commonwealth. After two world wars, however, the British were not able to return to the role of superpower they had held for two centuries.

remained intact. Some of the British possessions in the Far East had been conquered by Japan, but all voluntarily returned to British rule after the war.

Historian Norman Moss, who describes the transition of superpower status from Great Britain to the United States in his 2008 book *Picking Up the Reins*, states: “British atlases showed a quarter of the earth either ruled by Britain or linked to it in the Commonwealth. Britain ruled directly much of Asia and most of Africa and it was the dominant power in the Arab world” (p. 27).

Other European powers did not fare so well. The Dutch soon lost Indonesia, and the French had to fight a prolonged war in Indochina.

“A catastrophe scarcely thinkable”

One of America’s most respected historians, James Truslow Adams, wrote a history, *The British Empire*

1784-1939, in 1940—the crucial year of the Battle of Britain, an airborne struggle for survival when the future of the world depended on Britain holding out against an attempted Nazi invasion.

At the end of the book, he wrote the following warning to his fellow Americans: “The possible overthrow of the British Empire would be a catastrophe scarcely thinkable. Not only would it leave a vacuum over a quarter of the globe into which all the wild winds of anarchy, despotism and spiritual oppression would rush, but the strongest bulwark outside ourselves for our own safety and freedom would have been destroyed” (p. 358).

It certainly seemed that the preservation of the British Empire was in the best interests of the United States and other nations.

One year after the war, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff similarly advised: “The defeat or disintegration of the British Empire would eliminate from Eurasia the last bul-

wark of resistance between the US and Soviet expansion... Our present position as a world power is of necessity closely interwoven with that of Britain” (Moss, p. 64).

The British did not only have the ultimate responsibility for financing their empire—which included a quarter of the world’s people—they were also soon embroiled in fighting a war against communists in Greece, where Britain stationed 9,000 troops to support the anti-communist forces and had given 40 million pounds in financial assistance in the months following World War II.

But by February 1947, in the middle of the harshest winter on record, the British could no longer afford to support Greece. A cabinet meeting on Feb. 18 led to London asking Washington to take over, announcing that aid to Greece “would stop on March 31. It was accompanied by another note saying Turkey also needed help and Britain could not provide it” (p. 62).



German Chancellor Angela Merkel looks over at U.S. President Barack Obama during a meeting at the White House on Nov. 3, 2009. What the EU has achieved is a powerful commercial and political system that places Europe in a position to assume global leadership.

Although few comprehended it at the time, this change was truly momentous. “For two centuries Britain had been the dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean. Now it seemed to be surrendering that role in two key countries.

“It is often said that Americans lack a historical sense that Europeans have, but on this occasion it was the Americans who saw the historical significance of that moment.

“To British ministers, battling from day to day to keep the country’s head above water, this seemed to be just a temporary retrenchment in one area. None of them appeared to see any larger implications in the decision.

“The American view was put in grandiloquent terms by Joseph M. Jones, who was in the State Department at the time: ‘Reading the messages, [it was] realized . . . that Great Britain had within the hour handed the job of world lead-

ership, with all its burdens and all its glory, to the United States” (p. 64).

The date was Feb. 21, 1947—the day the United States effectively replaced Great Britain as the world’s global superpower.

Changing roles prophesied

“And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh,” reads Genesis 48:20. In this passage of Scripture, the patriarch Jacob (Israel) had prophesied that the descendants of his two grandsons, the sons of Joseph, would “become a multitude of nations” (verse 19) and a great nation—a prophecy fulfilled first in the British Empire and Commonwealth and secondly in the United States, the great republic that broke away from the empire. Ephraim, the multitude of nations, was to be great before Manasseh.

The supremacy of first Britain with its empire and then the United States of America was prophesied

for “the last days” (Genesis 49:1). But just as the British Empire collapsed due to debt and an overstretched military, *so the United States faces the same problems today.*

Prophecy shows that, at the time immediately before the second coming of Jesus Christ, global power will pass to a revived and renewed Roman Empire—a new world superpower based in Europe.

To be clear, however, the EU is not the prophesied end-time power in its final, biblical form. Bible prophecy clearly states that 10 “kings”—we might call them presidents, premiers or prime ministers—will give their power and authority to a final supreme leader who rules over them all.

What the EU has achieved is a powerful commercial and political system that places Europe in a position of global leadership. The final European power will likely emerge from this. Exactly how remains to be seen.

To learn more about prophesied end-time events, see our booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* online or request a free copy to be mailed to you. Also, to understand what the Bible reveals about the future of the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other countries, request or download your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. ❖

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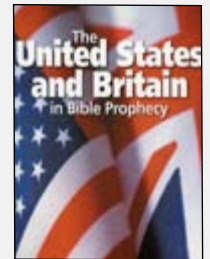
The United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and other English-speaking peoples have played a major role in modern world history. What does the Bible say about the role they will play in the future?

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In Brief

News and trends that affect your life

Turkey's Government Embracing Militant Islam

Turkey has been a longtime strategic ally of the West—including Israel—having the second-largest military force in NATO. But Turkey is “signaling it’s leaving its Western friends” with its “embrace of extremist neighbors” (Jill Nelson, “Switching Sides,” *World*, Nov. 21, 2009).

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the democratic Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923. Since then, Turkey has tried to maintain a secular government—one not controlled by the dominant religion of Islam.

A turning point came in 2002, when the AKP, a Muslim-oriented political party, gained power and installed Recep Erdogan as prime minister. As he had promised, Erdogan pushed for full membership in the European Union, but now it’s obvious that he has given up on that goal. Some of the reasons? Many Europeans oppose full EU membership for a large Muslim nation (with 97 percent of its land mass in Asia). And Turkey’s old ally, the United States, is showing major signs of weakness.

Lately Erdogan has been blatantly announcing his support for the Muslim world, including Iran and terrorist organizations like Hamas. It seems the West is in denial about this geopolitical earthquake.

Church Leaders Sign Manhattan Declaration

Citing conscience issues with several social trends, 145 religious leaders have signed what they call the Manhattan Declaration, saying they will not cooperate with laws that could be used to compel their groups to participate in or support abortions, same-sex relationships or stem cell research.

“We pledge to each other, and to our fellow believers, that no power on earth, be it cultural or political, will intimidate us into silence or acquiescence,” it says.

A mixture of evangelical, Catholic and Orthodox leaders signed the document, which is aimed at stirring support for what they call the three most important social issues facing American society today. It appears to be an effort to rally Christian support at a time when the historic religious foundation of American culture appears to be cracking. The so-called Moral Majority

of the past has been disbanded, shattered by the very political system it sought to enter. The culture wars have made significant inroads into the moral and ethical behavior of Americans. Is this the last stronghold of conservatism against the postmodern culture?

The document says, “We will not comply with any edict that purports to compel our institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life act; nor will we bend to any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent.”

A Kingdom Built on Sand

World markets went into a near panic during the recent Thanksgiving weekend over news that Dubai World, a key subsidiary of the nation of Dubai, could default on \$60 billion of debt. It appears that Dubai’s oil-rich cousins in the Persian Gulf region will step in and prevent a total collapse of Dubai.

Dubai has become a major site for banking, real estate and other financial transactions in the region. Although the debt is comparatively small, it has wider implications in investor confidence, so Dubai is “too big” to let fail.

Dubai has become the luxury shopping mall of a region known more for its religious fundamentalism and ethnic sensitivities. By building islands shaped like palm trees and indoor ski slopes, Dubai has given a new name to conspicuous consumption. It is completely out of place, overbuilt for the neighborhood, and a magnet for envy and anger among the extremist elements of the Islamic world. Dubai has no oil wealth, so it is reliant on the kindness of the neighboring oil sheikhdoms, who will not let its materialistic excesses bring down the region.

Dubai will survive. But the temporary panic and concern from the major financial centers of New York, London and Tokyo should be a lesson not to look only at the weaknesses of a place like Dubai. The risks are even greater in the major developed nations. Bigger companies and nations, including the United States, face greater risk than that of Dubai. That this is not acknowledged by world leaders should send an alarm that not only are many financial structures built on sand, but that many of the wise have their heads stuck in the sands of denial.

Contributors: Don Hooser and Darris McNeely

“**HOLD FAST**” (Continued from page 16)

of spiritual ATM machine from which our specific needs come rolling out. But understanding the fullness of what Christ’s name means is important for praying meaningful and powerful prayers.

The all-encompassing quality of a name

There was a time when a name was the full personification of all that a person encompassed. A name spoke to one’s reputation based on his or her full capacity. Names were not merely spelled or written out. No, they were lived out and known by reputation! Your word was your bond, and your name sealed it.

It now begins to make scriptural sense why Paul encourages the Ephesians to know “what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:19-21).

Considering that Christ’s name is above all names, is it any wonder that the apostle John would later write that it was our Heavenly Father’s desire that “we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23)? John didn’t say, “Spell it, sign it or say it out loud.” He said, “Believe it!”

What would such belief in a name have meant to Antipas and his fellow saints in Pergamos? What exactly did they hold to by holding fast to Christ’s



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What exactly did the brethren in Pergamos hold to by holding fast to Christ’s name? With that said, what are you holding onto right now?

name? Was their understanding of this name above all names possibly parallel to that of those mentioned who would yet be in the future who “did not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11)? With that said, what are you holding onto right now?

Scripture spells out the name

Let’s allow the Scriptures to fill in not the letters of a name, but the attributes that all saints of God need to keep in heart when they “ask in His name.”

Antipas perhaps had held to the reality found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, which declared that Jesus is the Beloved of God (Ephesians 1:6). God’s Son is at the center of all that the Father desires.

Antipas would have further strengthened his grip on the teachings of John that confirmed that Jesus was the Word of God (John 1:14). Jesus is

not only the “Logos” or Word who is esteemed on par with God, but He is the effective and powerful Word who calls creation out of nothing and life out of death. Christ is not simply the informative Word of God who brings information, but the One who brings forth creation and the transformation of men’s lives.

Antipas would have probably come to appreciate the aspect of Christ’s prophesied name that echoes from the messianic prophecy of Isaiah. He proclaimed 700 years beforehand that one named Immanuel or “God with us” would proceed from heaven to earth so that man might touch God and, in turn, God might be touched by the existence and frailty of His creation.

Antipas might have remembered that one of the descriptions of the One for whom he would die was simply “the carpenter” or “carpenter’s son” (Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55). Perhaps such name identification would remind him that the One whose name he held onto not only created wood, but would work with wood and die on a cross of wood (Galatians 3:13).

One name leads to another

The Beloved. The Word. Immanuel. The Carpenter. Perhaps the understanding of one facet of the fullness of that name above all names would guide Antipas to reflect on another name that Jesus Himself dis-

World News and Prophecy Seminars

If you find this publication interesting and helpful, you may be interested in attending a weekend *World News and Prophecy* seminar. Seminars are planned for:

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- **Edmonton, Alberta**, on April 25 (Darris McNeely and Robin Webber).

For more information, please go to www.WNPonline.org.

closed: “I am the door” (John 10:9). Yes, He is our gateway to the Father above. He is our only entrance to this meaningful relationship as “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The One known as the “Door” is our return path to Eden in which God Himself desired to walk and talk with His special creation. He will yet abide again in the midst of another garden prophesied in Revelation 22:1-5.

But what happens when the door is seemingly slammed in our face and life is closing in all around us? It was then that perhaps Antipas and his fellow saints in Pergamos remembered how Jesus identified Himself as “I am the resurrection and the life” and went on to state, “He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25).

Piecing together a name of peace

As Antipas faced death, perhaps his heart beckoned forth one more name that would comfort him in his last moments. He recalled that the One on whose behalf he was about to die was called “Prince of Peace” by the prophet of old (Isaiah 9:6). The One to whose name he had held fast was the very same One who, by His own death on the cross, had ended once and forever the conflict between God and man.

Antipas must have realized that the peace that God grants is a divine calm that works from the inside out. It’s a peace that is better than knowledge, better than any understanding man might conjure up. It is the peace of knowing that what our Heavenly Father allows right now in our lives is best, even as His goodness for us is always better than our human best (Philippians 4:6-7).

Was Antipas humanly concerned as he was led to his death? I’m sure he was, for you and I would be too. After all, death places the mind in a wondrous focus. But was he worried? I tend to doubt it. Did he somehow doubt God’s love? I don’t think so, because one of Christ’s most oft-mentioned names is “the Lamb of God.” That

precious name makes plain the divine family’s own planned-out self-sacrifice for us. Was God’s unfathomable and undeniable love in question? No!

Did Antipas doubt God’s wisdom at the time of his impending martyrdom? I have a hunch that his mind and heart were in a good place as he recalled one of Christ’s titles being “the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). Worry or doubt by this man of Asia Minor would have indicated his concern that somehow God is not able to plan for His own or that the Master of our lives doesn’t know what is best for those who belong to Him.

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow

Is it possible that, as Antipas faced his executioner, he doubted the power of God to intervene in his life at this seemingly most critical moment? Perhaps as he said his last prayers he reflected on what Paul had shared with the Philippians when they needed comfort the most, that “God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11). This Christian brother of the first century understood that the name that he held fast to signified a spectacular existence that knew no bounds and met no borders.

As we approach the future, let’s remember one simple line: “You hold fast to My name.” This reminds us of a simple truth that prophecy is not about what you know, but what you are because of who you know. We should be growing each day to become more like Him.

Until that day when we will be united with Christ, Antipas and all those yet to understand the power of this One’s name, let’s fulfill the encouragement of Isaiah 30:21 of “this is the way, walk in it” by holding fast to that name. ❖



Robin Webber

How to Contact Us

AFRICA and ASIA (except as listed below): United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

AUSTRALIA: United Church of God—Australia, GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia. Phone: 0755 202-111 Fax: 0755 202-122

BENELUX countries (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg): P.O. Box 93, 2800 AB Gouda, The Netherlands

BRITISH ISLES: P.O. Box 705, Watford, Herts. WD19 6FZ England. Phone: 020 8386 8467 Fax: 020 8386 1999

CANADA: United Church of God—Canada, P.O. Box 144, Station D, Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada. Phone: (905) 876-9966, (800) 338-7779 Fax: (905) 876-0569 E-mail: info@ucg.ca

CARIBBEAN: United Church of God, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. E-mail: info@ucg.org

EAST AFRICA (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda): United Church of God—East Africa, P.O. Box 75261, Nairobi 00200 Kenya. E-mail: kenya@ucg.org

EASTERN EUROPE AND BALTIC STATES: United Church of God, Head Sõnumid, Pk. 62, 50002 Tartu Postkontor, Estonia

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

FRENCH-SPEAKING AREAS: Église de Dieu Unie—France, 127 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France

GERMANY: Vereinte Kirche Gottes, Postfach 30 15 09, D-53195 Bonn, Germany. Phone: 0228 - 9454636 Fax: 0228 - 9454637 E-mail: info@gutenachrichten.org

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

MALAWI: P.O. Box 32257, Chichiri, Blantyre 3, Malawi. E-mail: malawi@ucg.org

MAURITIUS: P.O. Box 53, Quatre Bornes. E-mail: mauritiust@ucg.org

NEW ZEALAND: United Church of God, P.O. Box 22, Shortland St., Auckland 1140, New Zealand. Phone: 0508-463-763

NIGERIA: United Church of God, P.O. Box 2265, Somolu, Lagos, Nigeria. Phone: 01-8113644 E-mail: nigeria@ucg.org

PHILIPPINES: United Church of God, P.O. Box 81840, DCCPO, 8000 Davao City, Philippines. Phone: (+63) 82 224-4444 Cell/Text: (+63) 918-904-4444

SCANDINAVIA: Guds Enade Kyrka, P.O. Box 3535, 111 74, Stockholm, Sweden E-mail: sverige@ucg.org

SINGAPORE: United Church of God, P.O. Box 37, MacPherson Rd., Singapore 913402

SOUTH AFRICA (and Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland only): United Church of God, Southern Africa, P.O. Box 2209, Beacon Bay, East London 5205. Phone/Fax: 043 748-1694

SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS: Iglesia de Dios Unida, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A. Phone: (513) 576-9796

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

UNITED STATES: P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027. Phone (513) 576-9796. E-mail info@ucg.org

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

ZIMBABWE: United Church of God, Zimbabwe, P.O. Box 928, Causeway, Harare. Cell Phone: 011716273 E-mail: zimbabw@ucg.org

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by Robin Webber

“And You Hold Fast to My Name”

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ gave a genuine compliment to one of the seven churches of Asia Minor mentioned in the book of Revelation. It is an utterly unique and personal compliment, because it related to that church’s understanding of who He is. It revolved around His name. The red-letter text of Revelation 2:13 simply but powerfully notes: “And you hold fast to My name...”

Sometimes we rhetorically ask, “What’s in a name?” Well, to the Church members of Pergamos and to the ascended Jesus Christ, the answer is: “Plenty!” You might say, “Everything.” The onslaught of prophesied persecution (fulfilling Christ’s statement in John 15:20: “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you”) was already underway in Asia Minor. Prophecy was no longer simply a matter of Spirit-led consideration but was now directly impacting them.

Antipas, one of their own, who the ascended Christ called “my faithful martyr,” had rendered the supreme sacrifice. Antipas had “held fast” to more than simply a signature or the verbalizing of an individual’s given title.

There is something far deeper here for us to understand when it comes to what and why Christ complimented this challenged congregation. It gives us reason to pause and discover the cause behind the name of the One for whom Antipas offered his ultimate supreme devotion. The answer behind the name may hold the key to how you will handle not only your many tomorrows, but the momentary challenges facing you today.

“Whatever you ask the Father in My name”

Approximately 60 years before John wrote, Jesus in His earthly ministry had challenged His followers. One of those followers, John, recorded that challenging promise for us: “Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (John 16:23). Jesus was pointing to a means for His followers to move beyond both the daily personal challenges and the gathering storm clouds of world events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ.

As God in the flesh, when Jesus mentioned this key to spiritual success to His followers, He foresaw the rise of despicable first-century persecutors like Nero and Domitian, who strove to strangle Christianity at its infancy. Even as He uttered these words, He foresaw (and would later reveal in His revelation to John) the coming of the dragon persecuting and chasing the woman into the wilderness (Revelation 12), a Beast and a religious deceiver (Revelation 13), and a world-dominating political, economic and religious system referred to as Babylon (Revelation 17 and 18).

In the midst of these collisions with God’s purpose, Christ also foresaw your desire to be a light for Him in an increasingly darkening society. No way does He want you to be left lost in a world that increasingly seems purposeless.

But, before we go further, let’s clear up something that could be a hindering misperception among some, especially new believers. Jesus never intended His name to merely be the conclusion of a prayer or some form

(See “**HOLD FAST,**” page 14)