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A New Superpower? Europe Takes a Big Step Forward!

Newspaper headlines on both sides of the Atlantic heralded the Irish ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. "Ireland's Yes vote creates a more powerful Europe," said the Scotland on Sunday. The New York Times headline even contained prophetic overtones: "Gaining a Powerful Presidency, European Union Seeks a Job Description and a Leader." What is the long-term biblical significance?

by John Ross Schroeder

Why do *World News and Prophecy* and its sister publication *The Good News* spend so much of their magazine space and journalistic time analyzing current events on the European continent and in the British Isles?

Noted *Daily Mail* columnist Melanie Phillips helps us explain: "Europe is not some marginal issue that belongs to a discredited and best forgotten past. It is the meta-issue, the one that underpins all other [political] issues. The British people know this. That is why 70 per cent want a referendum on the treaty. It's why no fewer than 40 per cent want to come out of the EU altogether" ("David Cameron and the Spectre of 'President' Blair," Oct. 5, 2009, emphasis added throughout).

About a month ago I journeyed by train and boat from London to Dublin on a church assignment. Boarding a bus from the Dublin docks to a city-center railway station, I noticed prominent posters urging a "yes" vote on just about every block. The advertising campaign has



Reuters/Petr Josek Snr

Czech President Václav Klaus, a committed "Eurosceptic," attends a demonstration opposing the Lisbon Treaty signing.

overwhelmed Irish voters. Millions of euros were poured into the "yes" campaign. Substantial concessions to EU law were also granted to the Irish government. Melanie Phillips' frank (See "SUPERPOWER," page 3)



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"Whom heaven must receive until the times of

Restoration

of all things ... ACTS 3:21

Discerning This Time

A number of events have occurred in recent weeks that bear on topics we cover in *World News and Prophecy*. It reminds me that the pace of our time seems to be speeding toward a culmination of prophecy. We need to watch and understand.

On Oct. 2 the European Union took another step toward a larger role in world affairs when Ireland ratified the Lisbon Treaty. Poland followed a few days later, leaving only the Czech Republic as the lone holdout on approving a plan that will create a potentially larger role for Europe. Then on Nov. 3 Czech Republic President Václav Klaus finally signed it. The treaty, when implemented, will create the post of a European president and give the EU the ability to create a unified foreign policy.

Europe has a long way to travel in becoming a power to rival anything like what the United States has been in recent decades. But it is clearly on the ascent, and Bible prophecy shows us Europe will play a key role in the events leading to the end of this age.

The second item of news also connects to Europe's rise. The talk about the decline of the dollar as the world's reserve currency continues. Rising levels of American debt have created fear among lender nations that their investment in dollars will one day collapse. Reports say that China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and others have begun laying the groundwork for a currency arrangement that would supplant the dollar as the key currency in trading. Should this occur, and many experts say it is inevitable, it would make it extremely difficult to finance the U.S. debt. America would have to borrow euros or another currency to buy oil from OPEC nations.

The decline of the dollar is a critical national security issue. It would cripple the nation's economic foundation and limit its military capability around the world. Like Great Britain in its days of imperial decline, the far-flung navies and armies would have to retreat, leaving a power vacuum that others would rush to fill. The result would be something far different from the Pax Americana of recent years. I find that many are blissfully unaware of the consequences of the decline of the dollar on world financial markets.

The third issue is the growing menace of a nuclear Iran in the Middle East. Time is running out, as many believe it is only a matter of months before Iran has a nuclear weapon and the ability to deliver it, with Israel as the likely target. Diplomacy has not worked to end Iran's development program, and so the talk of economic sanctions or a military strike continues.

Israel is the most likely nation to intervene militarily to destroy Iranian facilities; and should this occur, an all-out war of retaliation would be launched. Oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz would be disrupted and prices would skyrocket, creating another round of financial crisis. A nuclear arms race among other Middle Eastern countries would be ignited. A nuclear Iran would destabilize the entire region and have a worldwide impact.

These events remind us of Christ's warning to "discern this time" (Luke 12:56). Christ's insistence that His disciples watch and understand their time in history is rooted in a need to repent and believe in the gospel of the Kingdom of God lest we perish (Luke 13:5; Mark 1:14-15). Our world is changing before our eyes, and God is gracious to give us warning if we only have the eyes to see. It is time we turn to the Bible for the understanding that can convict us. It is time to awake and prepare our lives for what lies ahead.

—Darris McNeely



Darris McNeely

“SUPERPOWER” (Continued from page 1)

assessment was: “The Irish people have had their arms twisted to deliver the required ‘yes’ vote on the EU’s constitutional Lisbon treaty” (ibid.).

What happens now?

Only the Czech Republic remained a potential obstacle to complete ratification. Czech President Václav Klaus, after staunch opposition to the Lisbon Treaty, finally signed on Nov. 3. Stated *The Wall Street Journal* last month: “The European Union’s Lisbon Treaty, meant to streamline the bloc’s decision making and increase its global clout, has been approved by 27 national parliaments... For it to come into effect, one more man needs to say yes: Czech President Václav Klaus, a committed euroskeptic who so far has refused to sign on” (“A Leader Delaying Lisbon Treaty?” Oct. 19, 2009).

But the leaders, diplomats and chief supporters of the European Union were frighteningly relentless in their dogged determination to push this treaty through to final completion. *The Sunday Times* stated: “In faraway Brussels furious diplomats were calling for his [Klaus’s] impeachment and even his country’s expulsion from the European Union because of his obstinate refusal to sign the Lisbon treaty... European leaders were told he was not available to take their calls” (“Germans Seek Ways to Oust Czech President Václav Klaus Over EU Treaty,” Oct. 11, 2009).

President Klaus clearly stated, “I have always considered this treaty a step in the wrong direction.” This remark was not well received in Paris, Berlin and Brussels. French and German diplomats were exploring ways to “impeach him or change the Czech constitution to take away his right of veto... Jiri Oberfalzer, a member of the Czech senate and Klaus’s closest ally, said Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president, had already threatened the Czechs with expulsion from the EU” (ibid.).

These alleged threats from the French and the Germans were probably little more than empty rhetoric, but it is frightening to contemplate what Brussels might do to EU member



Reuters/ Cathal McNaughton

A “yes” campaigner celebrates outside Dublin Castle in Dublin after Ireland signs the Lisbon Treaty.

states if it gains the power to carry out these threats.

Klaus knew signing was inevitable after the Czech Constitutional Court turned down the last objection. “The Eurosceptic Mr Klaus had recently said he would no longer attempt to block the treaty, after receiving the promise of an opt-out from the EU’s Charter of Fundamental Rights. Mr. Klaus said the opt-out was needed to avoid property claims from ethnic Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia after World War II” (“EU Reform Treaty Passes Last Test,” *BBC News*, Nov. 3, 2009).

Losing yet more national sovereignty

The big issue for Britain remains in the realm of the continual erosion of national sovereignty—the ability of a country to effectively govern itself relatively free of outside interference. Melanie Phillips pointed out the high stakes for the United Kingdom in her weekly *Daily Mail* column: “Frankly, unless the Lisbon treaty is stopped, there is little point in [Conservative Party leader David] Cameron or anyone else busting a gut to win the General Election, since Parliament will be reduced to the status of Westminster regional council in the empire of Euroland” (ibid.).

Mrs. Phillips further pointed out that “even without the constitution,

the EU has already paralysed our ability to govern ourselves in myriad different ways” (ibid.).

This is not the only point of view on the Lisbon Treaty. U.K. Foreign Secretary David Miliband sees it quite differently. He stated in a recent *Times* article: “Our role in Europe magnifies the power of our ideas, which strengthens our international clout in Washington, Beijing and Moscow... The Lisbon Treaty gives Europe the chance to be an effective force defending the gains of the last 60 years” (“Britain Is Still a Big Player. Europe Needs Us,” Oct. 26, 2009).

At this juncture, former Prime Minister Tony Blair enters the picture in a paradoxical way. He has been considered a leading candidate for the European Union’s first president, even though many in his own country basically oppose a European federation and potential world superpower. By comparison, the other candidates in continental Europe appear to most as little more than faceless bureaucrats.

Polls have consistently shown that the Conservative Party is likely to assume power in the next British general election in May (or perhaps even before). Its more vociferous spokesmen have promised their opposition to Tony Blair if he becomes the EU’s president, as described in a major feature article

in *The Sunday Telegraph* titled “Tony Blair Becoming EU President Would Mean ‘Permanent Warfare,’ Tories Warn” (Oct. 11, 2009).

Melanie Phillips summed up her view of the effects of this new treaty (or constitution) on national

sovereignty: “If this constitution comes into effect, Britain and the other EU member states will no longer be self-governing nations. Foreign policy, defence, social, economic and welfare policies, immigration, internal security—*every national*

interest will be subordinated to this new anti-democratic entity” (ibid.).

What God sees

God’s political and geographic vision is many times sharper than our own. He understands and sees Europe as no human being or nation does. He has revealed His thoughts in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments.

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

In summary, there were to be seven distinct resurrections of the original Roman Empire. A superpower consisting of 10 nations or groups of nations would be the seventh and final resurrection. The first six have already passed into history, and the final one may not be that long in coming. (Please see the accompanying sidebar, “A New Superpower to Emerge.”)

At the very end time, all nations will be severely chastened by tragic events to come. But they will finally come to realize that God Almighty is the ultimate Ruler in the kingdoms of men. A number of times the prophet Ezekiel quoted God saying, “They shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 7:27; 25:17; 29:21, etc.).

This understanding will reach its zenith when Jesus Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords. “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’” (Revelation 11:15). Jesus Christ Himself will then set up His ruling family on earth (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6).

Recommended reading

Where are the nations headed in this insecure and uncertain world? Having God’s revealed Word in the Bible, we don’t need to live in ignorance of the future. To understand more, download or request our free booklets *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* at WNPonline.org. ❖

A New Superpower to Emerge

An important biblical prophecy deals with the end-time revival of the Roman Empire, prophesied extensively in both Daniel and Revelation.

Daniel, interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a colossal human image, spoke of a series of “kingdoms” to arise on the world scene. The first of these, said Daniel, was the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar himself (Daniel 2:28-38). It was to be followed by three other kingdoms (verses 39-40). Comparing history with other prophecies, we can understand that these four kingdoms were, in order, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian and Roman empires.

Speaking of the fourth and final kingdom, the Roman Empire, Daniel said it would be “strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others” (verse 40). Rome indeed proved to be more dominant and enduring than its predecessors, swallowing up their remnants in a reign that lasted for centuries.

However, Daniel also revealed fascinating prophetic details of this final kingdom. The Roman Empire was represented by the legs and feet of the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The image had feet and toes composed “partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron.” This indicated that “the kingdom shall be divided” and “partly strong and partly fragile.” Also, “just as iron does not mix with clay,” the components of this kingdom would not adhere firmly together for long (verses 41-43).

Describing Jesus Christ’s return and His overthrow of all human governments, Daniel says: “In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed...; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (verse 44).

The Bible prophesies that a group of 10 “kings” or leaders, through alliances

or other arrangements, will give rise to a union that will fulfill these end-time predictions. Daniel’s prophecy indicates these leaders will preserve their cultures and languages, so it will not be one integrated group of states, such as the United States, but 10 individual political and cultural entities united for a common purpose. Some will be much stronger than others.

Notice that the book of Revelation gives more details: “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:12-14).

The current moves to expand and solidify the European Union appear to be a precursor to this prophesied power. It is interesting to let history reveal the roots of the movement to unify Europe.

In the Jan. 29, 1996, issue of *Newsweek*, Michael Elliot reported: “In January 1957, six nations signed a treaty on the site of the ancient Roman Capitol, and brought into being the European Economic Community... An aide to Paul-Henri Spaak, the then Belgian foreign minister, remembers that his boss said, ‘Do you think that we have laid the first stone of a new Roman Empire?’ Recalls the aide, ‘We felt very strongly we were Romans that day.’”

Certainly the idea of establishing a new Roman Empire was on the minds of the founders of the current organization of European nations. It has continued to prosper as barriers to integration tumble and greater cooperation and unity in economic and military affairs come about. Time will tell where these trends will lead—and how quickly.

How Long Will the NATO Alliance Last?

The 50th anniversary of the NATO alliance in 1999 was a celebration of the successful defense of the free world. Just 10 years later there are signs of serious trouble within the alliance.

by Paul Kieffer

One month before being officially nominated as the Democratic Party candidate for president in 2008, then Senator Barack Obama visited Berlin, Germany, and gave a speech to a crowd of some 200,000 Germans at the Victory Column, located 1 mile west of the Brandenburg Gate.

At the time, some opinion polls indicated that a number of Germans would rather have Obama as their own chancellor instead of Angela Merkel.

Obama's speech in Berlin on July 24, 2008, was well received by the enthusiastic crowd. However, the next day some commentators wondered whether people had really understood the implications of what Obama had said. He mentioned the threat of terrorism and emphasized that "no one nation, no matter how large or powerful, can defeat such challenges alone," and he praised "Europe's role in our [America's] security and our future."

The portion of the speech that really got news analysts' attention was Obama's reference to Afghanistan: "In this new century, Americans and Europeans alike will be required to do more—not less. Partnership and cooperation among nations is not a choice; it is the one way, the only way, to protect our common security..."

"The Afghan people need our troops and your troops; our support and your support to defeat the Taliban and al Qaeda, to develop their economy, and to help them rebuild their nation."

With his speech in Berlin, Obama had served notice that as president he would expect Germans—and America's other NATO partners—to contribute their fair share of the resources needed for NATO's mission in Afghanistan.

An increasingly unpopular war

America's NATO allies in Europe are confronted by the challenge of meeting

their obligations to the alliance's mission in Afghanistan in the face of growing public discontent over the war.

Germany is no exception. According to public opinion polls, two thirds of the German people doubt that a military victory can be achieved in Afghanistan. The same percentage of Germans oppose a continuation of their country's military presence in Afghanistan.

When German troops were first sent to Afghanistan, the German government insisted that they be stationed in northern Afghanistan instead of the southern part of the country. Officials emphasized repeatedly that Germany's NATO troops were limited to the official NATO mission in Afghanistan, described as assisting "the Afghan Government in exercising and extending its authority and influence across the country, paving the way for reconstruction and effective governance" (quote from the NATO Web site).

By contrast, American troops in southern Afghanistan were also fighting terrorism by going after the Taliban.

In their early deployment to northern Afghanistan, German troops experienced only occasional direct resistance by Taliban fighters. In recent months, however, the number of German casualties has increased as the Taliban have begun to target German patrols. It seems as if the Taliban are now engaging America's NATO allies, like the Germans, in an attempt to influence public opinion back home.

If so, their tactic is working. Public outrage in Germany was intense during the first week of September after a German NATO commander called for American air support to recapture two hijacked fuel trucks.

The air strike reportedly killed as many as 70 civilians and prompted Afghan

In the absence of a sustained response to an ongoing, common, immediate threat—such as the Soviet Union had been during the Cold War—NATO has become an alliance without a real purpose.

President Hamid Karzai to issue harsh criticism of the German commander: “What an error of judgment! More than 90 dead all because of a simple lorry that was, moreover, immobilised in a riverbed. Why didn’t they send in ground troops to recover the fuel tank?” (“Rift Widens Between US and Germany Over Botched Afghanistan Air Strike,” *The Guardian*, Sept. 7, 2009).

Aside from the backlash from incidents like this one, German participation in NATO missions outside the geographic boundaries of NATO member countries is a continual domestic challenge. Each military deployment requires the approval of the German parliament, the Bundestag, and approval has to be renewed at regular intervals.

Despite growing public opposition to the war in Afghanistan, it has not yet become a major political issue, largely because Germany’s membership in the NATO alliance is supported by all major parties. However, an increase in German casualties will no doubt lead to greater public clamor for an end to Germany’s involvement in Afghanistan. As the Vietnam War proved, public opinion can be a key factor in deciding whether to continue or curtail military deployment.

Other European countries involved in Afghanistan are also facing domestic pressure to withdraw. Just days after the botched air strike on the fuel trucks, Britain, France and Germany proposed a conference to discuss how the Afghan government could take on greater responsibility for its own security, thereby lessening the need for NATO troops in the country.

Who’s the bad guy now?

When the NATO alliance was formed 60 years ago by the United States, Canada and European nations, it was clearly defensive in nature. NATO countries were obligated to support any member nation attacked by an aggressor. The potential aggressor was clearly the Soviet Union, and the alliance’s purpose was to prevent westward expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence in Europe.

Of course, during the Cold War there was occasional friction among NATO members or between the United States and European NATO countries. However, the overriding goal of preserving Western Europe’s freedom and economic system provided a common interest strong enough to override temporary differences of opinion.

The demise of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact alliance has changed all that. Europe is no longer threatened by an ideological “continental divide.” Former Warsaw Pact countries have now joined the NATO alliance (and the European Union).

The defensive nature of the NATO alliance still exists on paper but not in practical application. Instead, the alliance has also assumed responsibility beyond its own borders in fulfilling United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Events of the last 10 years have shown that America and Europe—and even European nations among themselves—are not always unified in their assessment of strategic threats.

A prime example is former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s characterization of the “old” and “new” Europe during the crisis over Iraq and the Iraq war. Aside from some exceptions—most notably Britain—Western European nations (“old” Europe) were reluctant to support U.S. President George Bush’s “coalition of the willing,” in contrast to Eastern European nations (“new” Europe).

More recently, European NATO members disagree over how to deal with Russia. Dependent on natural gas deliveries from Russia, NATO members in Western Europe generally support a cautious, conciliatory approach. By contrast, Eastern European NATO members prefer a more confrontational style.

It was no surprise when Eastern European NATO members supported the Bush plan to install a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic. In the summer of 2008 the United States signed a treaty with each country for the installation of a radar system in the Czech Republic and 10 missile silos in Poland.

President Obama’s decision in September to stop the implementation of the project upset Eastern European allies. Their disappointment was best expressed by former Polish President Lech Walesa in a television interview: “The Americans



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are always concerned only about their own interests and just take advantage of everyone else.”

Walesa urged Poland to reassess its relationship with the United States. Analysts now expect Eastern Europeans to see the need for better cooperation with Brussels on security issues. President Obama may have contributed to “new” and “old” Europe becoming more closely aligned.

Who pays the bill?

During the 1999 NATO bombing campaign to force Serbian troops out of Kosovo, then German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder voiced disappointment over America’s reluctance to share spy satellite intelligence with its European allies. In his frustration Schroeder suggested that Europe should have its own spy satellites. He admitted, though, that America could do as it pleased since it was supplying over 90 percent of the equipment used for the Kosovo military intervention.

America’s call for more equitable burden-sharing within the NATO alliance did not begin with Senator Obama’s July 2008 speech in Berlin. With the Soviet threat gone, the unfulfilled desire to have Europe pay a larger share of its defense bill seems more futile now than at any time during the last 60 years when Europe enjoyed protection via America’s nuclear shield.

Defense spending levels of NATO’s main European members have declined in recent years, with a corresponding weakening of military capabilities. Germany, for example, today has 40 percent fewer soldiers and 50 percent fewer combat aircraft than it did at the end of the Cold War 20 years ago. Similar developments have taken place in key NATO nations like Spain and Italy.

The decay of European NATO military forces has reached the point that U.S. military officials are concerned that joint operations are becoming difficult and may well become impossible if the trend is not reversed.

Like the Kosovo intervention, the war in Afghanistan reflects



Reuters/Jim Young

Barack Obama waves to his audience after giving a speech at the Victory Column in Tiergarten Park in Berlin on July 24, 2008. In his speech, then presidential hopeful Obama said he would expect Germans to contribute their fair share of the resources needed for NATO’s mission in Afghanistan.

unequal burden sharing, irritating even some European officials. In a speech last January, British Defense Secretary John Hutton had harsh criticism for European governments that fail to bear their fair share of the burden.

“Freeloading on the back of U.S. security is not an option if we wish to be equal partners in the transatlantic alliance,” he warned in language less diplomatic than Obama’s Berlin speech. “Anyone who wants to benefit from collective security must be prepared to share the ultimate price.”

Hutton also appeared to question Germany’s approach and that of other allies who believe that humanitarian and nation-building tasks are a fair substitute for combat duty. “It isn’t good enough to always look to the U.S. for political, financial, and military cover. And this imbalance will not be addressed by parceling up NATO tasks—the

‘hard’ military ones for the U.S. and a few others (including Britain) and the ‘soft’ diplomatic ones for the majority of Europeans.”

European NATO members would respond by saying that NATO’s ISAF mission in Afghanistan is nation-building, not combat in support of Washington’s “war on terror.”

The beginning of the end?

American military commanders believe that the coming months will be crucial for the ultimate success or failure of the NATO mission in Afghanistan, which for them means a military victory over the resurgent Taliban. Likewise, the NATO mission in Afghanistan itself may well decide the future of the alliance itself.

If NATO cracks over Afghanistan, a short-sighted view would be that Europeans got tired of being pressured to do more fighting in

(See “NATO,” page 13)

An American Thanksgiving

Every year Americans gather on the fourth Thursday of November to give thanks for a land of plenty and a year of blessings. What if Americans truly gave thanks to God for their blessings? Could it make a difference for the future?

by Darris McNeely

It is a sign of hope that Thanksgiving is still so popular throughout the nation. It shows there is a remnant within the land who recognize that materialism alone does not satisfy the deepest human needs for meaning and purpose in life.

Last month my wife and I made a trip to Canada and spent a week with friends in Newfoundland. As we were leaving, Canada was about to celebrate its national day of Thanksgiving. Theirs falls a little more than a month before we celebrate ours in the United States. I felt like staying over another day just to celebrate with our friends, but home called me back.

I have always been in love with the American Thanksgiving. As the fall season comes to a close and a nation gathers for a celebratory meal with family and friends, the romantic within me is unleashed. For a day I can imagine a land and its people turning their faces to God—all in their own way acknowledging something larger, more expansive, than the narrow confines of daily life.

Sometime in my youth I saw an old Currier and Ives engraving of a New England farmhouse with smoke curling out of its chimney. Lights were on inside, and people were arriving in buggies all laden down with baskets of food. Was it a homecoming? Were children coming home to Grandma's house?

I would put myself into that picture and desire the same for my family. For a time in my youth we did go to Grandma's home on Thanksgiving and gather with our large family of cousins, aunts and uncles for a day of feasting. My wife and I have tried through the years to keep this tradition going in our growing family by gathering with our parents and bringing along the children and grandchildren. It gets harder as the years go by, but we make every effort to gather on this day.

History and hope

The origins of the day are well known. The first year in the new world for pilgrim settlers in New England was rough, and they gathered with Native Americans

to have a meal and give thanks. Later, it became customary for nearly every U.S. president to call for an annual day of thanksgiving. The proclamations began with George Washington. But it was during Franklin Roosevelt's second term that the fourth Thursday in November was fixed as the national day of Thanksgiving.

Today Thanksgiving remains popular as a holiday of traditional foods, family gatherings and football. This marvelous day of collective family and national bonding hints of an underlying spirituality even though secularism is making inroads into the character of the people. Ironically, the popularity of the day is in part because it is a *national* rather than a *religious* day of Thanksgiving. This is not lost on many observers.

That the day is still so popular throughout the nation is a sign of hope. There is a remnant within the land who recognize there is something more to America than just being one large consumer for the world's goods. Materialism alone, some understand, does not satisfy the deepest human needs for meaning and purpose in life.

Reflecting on the year

It has been a tough year for the world's economy. In the United States, upwards of one third of the wealth has been wiped off the books. Housing prices have plummeted, the stock market has lost billions of dollars of value, and the retirement accounts of the aging baby boomers were turned upside down. And while the entire system did not collapse and the market did make some modest gains, there is a sense of unease about the future. Those who stop to consider have a sense that things will not be the same going forward, but they do not know just what to expect.

Like many of you, I look at my financial statements each month and see the erosion. It is as if I have put my money into bags with

holes. It fell right through and has disappeared, never to be found again.

We are living a perfect example of God's words through the prophet Haggai: "You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6).

This Thanksgiving, like last, offers an opportunity to reflect that the good times may not last forever. The signs of the times tell us there are other nations and peoples who sense America has been weakened and are circling like predators desiring to seize the moment and wrestle her power, might and strength away for their own use.

Many say that great powers rise and fall and that America is declining along the natural way of nations. The time has come, they say, for America to exit the stage and give way for others on the ascent.

God's blessing

There is one thing wrong with this picture. The power and wealth America has held during its history is not something that was gained by its own exceptional abilities. The great national blessings celebrated each year at Thanksgiving were granted by God through a series of promises and blessings that stretch back in time to the biblical patriarch Abraham.

America's position in the world for more than 200 years is due more to the faithful promises of God than to anything done through its national experience. The wealth and power from God will not flow to others in the same way. It cannot be taken as the great nation stumbles.

The biblical details behind this key of understanding are told in our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. It is worth reading, especially at this season of Thanksgiving. For those who want to open a window of revealed understanding, it offers another dimension to world history. Your love for God and for America will be magnified through this booklet.



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The great national blessings celebrated each year at Thanksgiving were granted by God through a series of promises and blessings that stretch back in time to the biblical patriarch Abraham.

America is exceptional because God made her so. It is wealthy beyond any other empire in history because God prepared this land in advance and gave it to the descendants of Abraham in fulfillment of His pledge.

Its liberty and freedom are rooted in a biblical ethic well understood by the founding fathers. Imbedded in a unique form of governance, it has spread this freedom to many places throughout the world. Where the American and British form of law and economics were planted, people prospered, more than under any previous system. When the day comes that this influence is removed from the world, a different form of power will arise. The results will not be the same.

How stands the land?

On this American Thanksgiving, what do we see as we look out across the broad land?

We see a people searching for a way forward during a time of growing doubt and uncertainty. In 10 years, will America still hold its present role as the guarantor of freedom for a growing global economy, or will other powers rise to eclipse this long-held role? Will Americans enjoy the world's highest standard of living, or will increasing national debt cripple the nation beyond recovery?

It is time we Americans consider our ways, bend our knees to the God of

heaven and confess we need a new beginning and a new heart. It is time we take a fresh look at the Bible and seek a new national character forged in righteousness and humility. Before He completely removes His hand of blessing, it is time to seek God with our whole heart.

God will hear the prayer of one who is chastened and sincerely seeking Him. He can hear your prayer. He is closer than you think.

Use this year's Thanksgiving season to consider a new and better understanding of the God who has blessed this great land. Lift your hands and your heart in grateful thanks for what you have and ask this God to reveal Himself to you. ❖

Recommended Reading

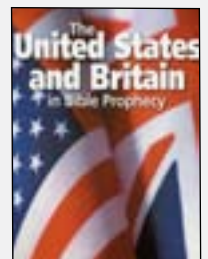
The United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and other English-speaking peoples have played a major role in modern world history. What does the Bible say about the role they will play in the future?

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Europe and the Church, Part 13

And One Is Yet to Come

The book of Revelation shows there is to be one more revival of the Roman Empire immediately prior to Christ's return. Is the European Union the prophesied revival?

by Melvin Rhodes

Europe was the major continent of the world for centuries during the colonial era until the end of World War II. Once again, it is set to revive, perhaps as a direct result of the current international financial crisis, which is leading to major changes across the globe.

My wife and I have often passed through Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport traveling to or from Ghana. Sometimes, we have broken up the return journey to Michigan with a short stop in England to visit family. There is a direct flight from Amsterdam to my hometown airport in the United Kingdom. When we have taken that option, we go through "Passport Control" in England. We are simply "In Transit" through the Netherlands.

So I was trying to understand why this time we had to go through immigration in Amsterdam when we were not actually visiting the Netherlands. We were, instead, heading to Cologne, Germany, for a three-day visit to the United Church of God office there. We were planning on touring Aachen and Trier for the purpose of further researching the history of Europe and the church.

I assumed that the "Passport Control" requirement had something to do with the Schengen Treaty, which was signed in 1985 by five member countries of what was then the 10-member European Community. I was not sure how many countries are now members, so I asked the official checking our passports.

"Twenty-six," was his answer.

"Twenty-six?" I asked with some incredulity. As there are 27 countries in the European Union, that meant only one was not a signatory. That one would be the United Kingdom, which I knew for a fact was not in the agreement. But I was also fairly sure that Ireland wasn't a member either.

His response to that was that only Iceland and the United Kingdom were

not in the "Union." Clearly, the passport official himself was not clear on the difference between the European Union and the Schengen Treaty! The United Kingdom is in the Union but not in the Schengen Treaty; Iceland is not yet a member of the EU but is a Schengen signatory. There are actually 25 members of Schengen, not all of whom are members of the EU.

Confusion about the EU

It was not surprising that an official at the airport did not understand. Few Europeans understand a great deal about the European Union, which has been slowly evolving since the Treaty of Rome was signed by the original six members in 1957. Those signatories pledged themselves to form "an ever closer union," which is exactly what has been happening since.

When you ask average citizens of the European Union what they think of the organization, often they will say it's too bureaucratic or too expensive. But most will agree that it has been successful in bringing the nations of Europe together, giving most of the continent over 60 years of unparalleled peace.

Whereas most people still identify themselves as British, French or German, they are also aware that they are now part of something much bigger, a group of nations that has achieved unprecedented prosperity. Indeed, following the financial upheavals of the last year, Europe today is the richest region of the world. Both *BusinessWeek* and *The Wall Street Journal* highlighted this new reality in September.

In fact, the United States now leads Europe in only one category—its mili-

tary power. In every other respect, the EU is more powerful.

As *Washington Post* bureau chief T.R. Reid put it in his 2004 book *The United States of Europe*: “The new United States of Europe—to use Winston Churchill’s phrase—has more people, more wealth, and more trade than the United States of America. The New Europe cannot match American military strength (and doesn’t want to, for that matter). But it has more votes in every international organization than the United States, and it gives away far more money in development aid. The result is global economic and political clout that makes the European Union exactly what its leaders want it to be: a second superpower that can stand on equal footing with the United States” (p. 1).

Is it time for Europe to wake up?

Five years later, a cover on the British magazine *The Economist* showed a sleeping Europa (the female symbol of Europe), about to be awakened by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, with words that accurately sum up Europe’s condition: “Eight wasted years. Two useless treaties. Three No votes. Ignored by China and America. But still the world’s biggest economy. Will somebody please...Wake Europe Up!” (Oct. 10, 2009).

Tony Blair has been seen as a leading candidate to be the EU’s first executive president, a position to be created now that all 27 member countries have signed the Lisbon Treaty. The treaty provides for a new, streamlined Europe, with its own president and foreign minister. It will also create a diplomatic service for the Union, giving it much greater clout around the world.

“The European project has spent too many of its first 50 years looking inwards: building the single market, sorting out institutions, arguing about money, endlessly negotiating treaties. In the next 50 years it should look out-



Reuters/Wes Herman

France’s President Nicolas Sarkozy, right, talks with German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, first left, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the start of European Union heads of state and government summit in Brussels Oct. 29, 2009. EU leaders discussed institutional changes that include the creation of a long-term president under the EU’s planned Lisbon reform treaty.

wards more. At present Europe is a weak actor on a stage dominated by America and China; India and Brazil are in the wings. Can this change?” (“Wake Up Europe!” *The Economist*, Oct. 10, 2009).

Perhaps a more important question is, Does the world want to see Europe rise again?

The final resurrection of the Roman Empire

Earlier articles in this series have shown the various revivals of the Roman Empire through the centuries and the church-state connection that has factored in all of them.

“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains [seven powerful empires] on which the woman [the

false religious system centered in Rome] sits. There are also seven kings [seven revivals of the ancient Roman Empire]. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time” (Revelation 17:9-10).

Justinian, Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles V, Napoleon and Hitler are the key leaders of the first six revivals of the Roman Empire. “And the other has not yet come.” Verses 12-14 help us understand that the final revival is immediately before the second coming of the Messiah: “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.



Former British Prime Minister and current Middle East Envoy Tony Blair has been seen as a leading candidate to be the EU's first executive president, a position to be created now that all 27 member countries have signed the Lisbon Treaty.

These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings.”

The EU is not the final resurrection of the Roman Empire, but it will likely lead to it.

The European Union currently has 27 members. More are likely to join. The growth of the EU is one of its greatest success stories. It's an idea whose time has come. Its biggest problem is managing its potential growth as more nations try to join.

But the Bible clearly shows that the final prophesied Beast power is a union of “ten kings” (or leaders). This could mean that 10 of the present member nations will form a full military and political union, led by a supreme leader referred to in the Scriptures as “the beast.”

It could also mean that Europe's political boundaries will be redrawn, creating 10 regions that will then choose their own leaders who, in turn, will choose the supreme leader over them all. A proposal along these lines was suggested a few years ago as an attempt to dampen ethnic and linguistic loyalties that have stalled the European project.

Another possibility is a repeat of the 1930s when democracies failed to solve the Great Depression and people turned to dictatorships.

There is a sense of urgency in this pivotal chapter of the book of Revelation, suggesting that the final European revival will come about as a matter of urgent necessity.

Daniel 11:40 prophesies a coming clash of civilizations between a revived “king of the North” and “king of the South,” the latter like-

ly an Islamic power, a successor to the ancient Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt. The “king of the North” was based north of Jerusalem in the third and second centuries B.C., and was finally taken over by Rome. Its future revival would be fulfilled by a revived Roman Empire whose tentacles reach into the Middle East.

Decline of the United States

It could also be that the urgent need for a fully united Europe comes about as a consequence of something bad befalling the United States, such as an economic collapse or a major terrorist attack.

It is clear that economic power, and thus political clout, is passing from the United States to Europe, China and other parts of the world. At the time of writing, one euro is worth about \$1.50 and there is increasing speculation on the dollar's future as the world's reserve currency.

Robert Fisk wrote in *The Independent* of a plan by the Russians, Chinese and Mideast oil-producing countries to replace the dollar as the unit for pricing oil. The world is increasingly realizing that the United States is less than serious about living within its means, thereby slowly eroding the value of its currency.

“In the most profound financial change in recent Middle East his-

Recommended Reading

The book of Revelation remains mysterious to most people today but offers great insight into the events leading up to one of the world's most momentous events—the return of Christ! For more information, request a free copy of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.



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tory, Gulf Arabs are planning—along with China, Russia, Japan and France—to end dollar dealings for oil, moving instead to a basket of currencies including the Japanese yen and Chinese yuan, the euro, gold and a new, unified currency planned for nations in the Gulf Co-operation Council” (“The Demise of the Dollar,” Oct. 6, 2009).

Mr. Fisk added: “The decline of American economic power linked to the current global recession was implicitly acknowledged by the World Bank president Robert Zoellick. ‘One of the legacies of this crisis may be a recognition of changed economic power relations,’ he said in Istanbul ahead of meetings...of the IMF and World Bank” (ibid.).

History meets prophecy

On our visit to Germany, we toured both Aachen, Charlemagne’s ancient capital, and Trier, the oldest German settlement and former capital of the Northern Roman

Empire. The first Catholic emperor of Rome, Constantine, lived there for a time, during which part of the cathedral was built. After Rome withdrew from the area in 400, a “Dark Age” descended upon it, which lasted until Charlemagne four centuries later. Meanwhile, the church kept the idea of Europe alive.

Europe was the major continent of the world for centuries during the colonial era until the end of World War II. Once again, it is set to revive, perhaps as a direct result of the current international financial crisis, which is leading to major changes across the globe.

Historically, economic power has always led to political and military power. As Europe is now the richest region of the world and the world’s greatest trading power, it will not be long until this is translated into greater political and military power.

A final revival of the Roman Empire is all set to take place in the not too distant future. ❖

The mythical character Europa, pictured here in a painting by French artist Noël-Nicolas Coypel, is the European Union’s symbol for pan-Europeanism.



Wikimedia Commons

“NATO” (Continued from page 7)

America’s war far from Europe and that America got tired of paying the lion’s share of NATO’s bills for European freeloaders. However, America did put up with the unequal burden-sharing within NATO during the Cold War because it was in America’s own strategic interest to do so.

A realistic assessment would be that NATO is no longer a serious alliance with an overriding common strategic purpose as it was throughout the Cold War. Defending Western Europe against Soviet expansion served America’s strategic purpose, and supporting America’s efforts to do so was obviously in Europe’s own best interests.

In the absence of a sustained response to an ongoing, common, immediate threat, NATO has become an alliance without a real purpose. Europe’s strategic interests are no longer as closely aligned with those of the United States, as evidenced by the Iraq war, relations with Russia, and energy and environmental policies, to name just a few. History shows that the eventual demise of an alliance that has served its purpose can only be a question of time.

If Bible prophecy is our guide to understanding world events, the rift already evident within the NATO alliance can be viewed as a precursor to future events. Europe and the United States will eventually move in opposing strategic directions and become competitors instead of equal partners.

Out of Europe will arise a final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire, whereas America’s destiny—and her future relationship with Europe—will be determined by her unknown heritage linked to the biblical patriarch Abraham.

Want to know more? Order or download our free booklets *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy* at WNPonline.org. They will provide you with valuable insights concerning the future of Europe and the United States. ❖

“**ETERNITY**” (Continued from page 16)

There is a famous saying regarding the great explorer: “He couldn’t tell anyone where he was going. He didn’t know where he was when he got there, and he couldn’t tell anyone else how to get there when he got back. And he did all of this on borrowed money.”

Serious students of Scripture can derive amazing parallels and powerful lessons concerning eternity from both the dramatic inscription on the monument and that humorous saying.

Most importantly, for persons of faith, there is an even greater reality embedded in our minds and hearts than any earthly monument can depict. It is the reality of another lion, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” none other than Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:5), forever tearing away and demolishing the word *no* to fill Christian lives with hope.

The book of Revelation additionally defines this Lion of Judah as “the First and the Last” and the One who holds the keys of the grave and death (Revelation 1:17-18). The powerful ramifications of a seamless world between life and death through Him and by Him are startling.

When have we arrived?

But how do we know when we have arrived at the eternal realm where Christ waits (John 14:2)? He said to “follow Me,” but how far? When, where and how do we plant the flag? We don’t want to make the same mistake as Columbus, who upon landing on shore called the indigenous population something



How do we measure something that is continuous? The world of time and space. It requires entering the ocean. Indeed, there is something beyond, and God

they were not. After all, India was still half a globe away.

Unlike Columbus, God is able to offer us a description of what our destination is like. After all, He inhabits eternity! Christ came out of eternity into our finite world of time and space and has returned in fullness to that realm.

Crossing the threshold of eternity

We will know we have crossed the threshold of eternity when we discover a totally new environment never beheld by those whose origin is dust. Revelation 21:1 describes this as a “new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.”

This same verse says there is “no more sea.” So often we focus on a

new heaven and new earth, but why “no more sea”? Could this be alluding to the absence of the fear of eternity as well as speaking of a body of water?

Consider for a moment that in antiquity the oceans and seas were considered hostile forces. Sailors hugged the coast in their travels and rarely ventured into open waters. Seas were considered naturally fearsome and likewise created social gulfs between humans.

The prophesied eternal environment is totally opposite from anything cultivated by human nature. It will be sent from heaven by God, and there will be no apprehensive barriers between God and man or with any other citizen of this timeless society.

We will know we have crossed the threshold of eternity when we discover new emotions as described in Revelation 21:4-5. Here, God our Father gives us a completely different list of noes, not to discourage us or hem us in, but to encourage us and allow us to expand. The list is a rolodex of wonderment spilling out no after no—no more tears, no death, no sorrow and no pain.

The study of eternity continues in Revelation 22:3-5, which expands the list of noes to include no more curses and no more night (darkness).

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:

- **Seattle, Washington**, on Feb. 13 (Melvin Rhodes and Robin Webber).
- **Calgary, Alberta**, on April 24 (Darris McNeely and Robin Webber).
- **Edmonton, Alberta**, on April 25 (Darris McNeely and Robin Webber).

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



method of measurement is beyond anything caught in stream of eternity that knows no spring and fills no asks us to take the time to think about it.

What makes the difference?

Let's ask ourselves what makes the astounding difference between the world of time and space and that of eternity? How do we know we have arrived?

The key is discovered in Revelation 21:22. One more "no" is mentioned. There is no more temple! Verse 22 proclaims, "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple."

This is the same revelation first hinted at in Ezekiel 48:35, which speaks of the eternal city of God. The book of Ezekiel ends with this resounding statement of cause and effect: "THE LORD IS THERE."

Revelation ends where God began in Genesis. God is again in place among His special creation. It has always been God's desire to be in the midst of His creation, walking and talking among His servants. His desire has always been for us to experience His love in one continual uninterrupted existence that never ends.

Do you know a little bit better where you are headed? Can you describe where you have been in Scripture, and can you show others the way? Can we come to appreciate how God through Jesus Christ has torn down every negative "no" to show us that there is much more beyond our world of limitations?

Rather than "no more beyond" sculpted in stone, we can come to recognize that the end of what we presently know is but the beginning of what God has to share.

Is eternity coming a little easier to your mind? I hope so. I purposefully avoided overwhelming you with intricate numerical figures or theories to dazzle your mind. It is better to enlarge your heart, if but for a moment. When it is all said and done, it is not the size of the universe that counts, but the size of our surrendered heart that glorifies God.

Leave some things to God

I wish I could tell you more, but God hasn't chosen to tell us everything. The wisdom of Scripture is to simply leave some things for God. Allow Him to surprise us.

Perhaps the message of Isaiah 30:21 ("This is the way, walk in it") in regards to the subject of eternity is best summed up by something I recently heard: "We don't have all the answers, because we don't even know all the questions. If you think you do, just wait until the next time a child offers one up. But this we do know—God has all the answers!" ❖



Robin Webber

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by Robin Webber

Peeking Into Eternity

All of us, at one time or another, have been asked the tantalizing question, “Do you want to take a peek?” We reply, “A peek at what?”

Well, here it comes again: “Do you want to take a peek?” I’m talking about something not too many people have dared to consider. I mean peeking into eternity.

It is not easy for the human mind to understand such a concept. Whenever I dare to consider eternity and what it must be like, that proverbial rubber band in my mind tends to snap with an exploding bang after just a few moments of pondering the mentally impossible. Perhaps you, too, have experienced the effect that painfully informs us we are still trapped in the world of time and space.

Well, join the crowd. The simple answer to our human frustration is that God intended for us to measure eternity not with our gray matter, but with our hearts.

Begin with the end in mind

Why speak of this subject in a magazine devoted to prophecy? Prophecy was not intended to solely be a mechanical exercise of putting scriptural equations together, but rather it is designed to prepare us for an existence beyond human comprehension.

The prophet Isaiah introduces us to the concept of eternity in association with God. His writing proclaims, “For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place’” (Isaiah 57:15). Thus, when we consider the God who reveals prophecy, we begin with this end in mind.

While other scriptures may help us define eternity, it is only here that God discloses that which He considers home. The prophet Isaiah offers us deeper understanding regarding God and eternity. The Hebrew word denotes “duration or continuity.” How do we measure something that is continuous?

The method of measurement is beyond anything caught in the world of time and space. It requires entering the stream of eternity that knows no spring and fills no ocean. Indeed, there is something beyond, and God asks us to take the time to think about it.

More beyond

In doing so, we share in the same dilemma as the Spanish Empire at the cusp of the Age of Discovery. They were equally perplexed by the reality that there was a whole new world before them. They created a story in stone as a reminder of this very fact.

In Valladolid, Spain, where Christopher Columbus died in 1506, there stands a monument commemorating the great discoverer. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the memorial is a statue of a lion destroying one of the Latin words that had been a part of Spain’s motto for centuries.

Before Columbus made his historic voyages, the Spaniards thought they had reached the outer limits of earth. Thus their motto was “*Ne Plus Ultra*,” which means “no more beyond.” The word being torn away by the lion is “*ne*” or “no,” making it read “*Plus Ultra*,” for Columbus had proved that there was “more beyond.”

(See “**ETERNITY**,” page 14)