



# United Church of God *an International Association*

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Dear brethren,

While I yearn to write a positive and happy letter to all of you, I simply cannot now when I see all the terror and violence occurring in the world. We need to regularly remind ourselves about the meaning of the times in which we live so that we can have hope.

What do you think when you watch the news today? The mindless brutality of Middle Eastern terrorists—even against each other—is unspeakable, beyond shocking. You likely heard or read of the barbaric execution of the Jordanian pilot who was burned alive in January.

I am in regular contact with Sabbath-keepers, friends and relatives in Ukraine who report about an extremely difficult winter as separatists and terrorists attack civilians and are inflicting thousands of casualties, many among them children. My heart aches, and I truly want it to end!

We are helping people as we can who are in Eastern Ukraine.

Almost everywhere you turn, you can see unshakable proof of what the apostle John revealed nearly 2,000 years ago: “The whole world is under the control of the evil one [Satan]” (1 John 5:19, New International Version).

What does that mean for us? We may hope against hope that it will all pass. But that reaction leaves us with questions like these: “Where will this all lead? When or *will* it stop? Can we truly have confidence that God knows what is going on, that He has a plan, that this all has a purpose?”

A few years ago PEW Research Center, an independent research group, conducted a national study and asked Americans what they thought life would be like by 2050. The result? Mirroring events of today, almost 60 percent believed that another world war would take place before 2050. Over half believed that a nuclear attack on the United States will take place. And perhaps most interestingly of all, over 40 percent of Americans surveyed believed that *by 2050, Jesus Christ will have returned to earth!*

When people see what’s happening in today’s world, they know this can’t go on escalating. We live in a world of economic integration and open borders. Through the Internet we have access to just about anything. One might think that more communication leads to better relationships. This is not so. If anything, we find today that instant communication often fuels and accelerates hatred, extremism and its outcome: terror.

We recently observed the 50th anniversary of the death of Winston Churchill, a great leader of the 20th century. After World War II, Churchill authored an intimate look at that devastating global conflict. One of the volumes was titled *The Gathering Storm*. It provides remarkable insight of what actually led to the most destructive war in history, one that ended with two devastating nuclear attacks on Japan. Here’s the point: Churchill’s work was most enlightening, but it was written *after* the fact.

Unlike Churchill's account, God authoritatively reveals *beforehand* what will happen. The Bible explains the reasons that we have so much mindless and brutal conflict. It reveals the base nature of humanity separated from God (Jeremiah 17:9) and under the relentless influence of a powerful evil being (1 John 5:19). You may have read recently that the infamous Doomsday Clock was moved up in January to mark "three minutes to midnight"—a grievous possible time of literal human extinction! With the current focus to modernize nuclear weapons, humanity will likely use them. Without forcible intervention, man would certainly destroy himself.

In this terror-stricken world, how can we make sense of today? *Can* we have hope? In Matthew 24, Christ's best-known and complete chronology of end-time events, He gave a prophecy for us: "There will be great distress [called in other translations "great tribulation"], unequaled from the beginning of the world until now" (Matthew 24:22, NIV). Speaking of a time soon to come, Jesus went on: "If those days had not been cut short, *no one would survive*" (verse 22, emphasis added throughout).

But here's the good news! "But for the sake of the elect [the people of God] those days *will* be shortened." Humanity *will* survive!

This time of great end-time tribulation is predicted in 30 different Bible prophecies. The outcome, however, is always intervention and salvation. That is where we secure our confidence and hope. We don't need to live in fear or bury our head in the sand. Our faith needs to be in the comforting and authoritative words of Jesus Christ, our Savior. The respondents to the PEW research were *right*—He *is* the one who will be returning to restore this earth!

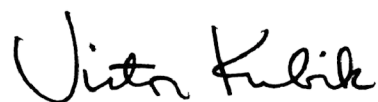
People in the first-century Church understood this. Notice what the apostle Peter taught. We must *repent* (completely change our mind, behavior and focus toward God) "so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ...whom heaven must receive *until the times of restoration of all things*" (Acts 3:19-22).

A time of restoration of all things *is* coming, but is not yet here. We live in a critical time just before that. We desire it greatly, *but the time is not yet*. At the same time that we approach these critical days of survival, the world has almost universally sunk to the basest levels of behavior. Even so, the Bible clearly instructs us to embrace hope and the ways of God, holding fast as we approach the end of this age: "Watch therefore, and pray always *that you may be counted worthy* to escape all these things that will come to pass" (Luke 21:36).

Watching the almost unimaginable accounts of terror in the news should make us stop and think. Through your continued support, we are able to help people discover for themselves these critical biblical truths. They enable people not be fearful or live in denial. As God opens people's minds, we want them to understand the clear timeless message that He gives to all about the meaning of seemingly barbaric current events. We want them to have hope, to have the opportunity to repent and change.

May God bless and establish you in your journey of faith, especially in this time of uncertainty and distress.

In Christ's service,



Victor Kubik