

Vol. 6, No. 4 • July/August 2019

# DISCERN

A Magazine of *Life Hope & Truth*



## 10 Questions to Ask Before You Get Married



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### July/August 2019; Vol. 6, No. 4

*Discern* magazine (ISSN 2372-1995 [print]; ISSN 2372-2010 [online]) is published every two months by the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, as a service to readers of its LifeHopeandTruth.com website. *Discern's* home page is LifeHopeandTruth.com/Discern. Free electronic subscriptions can be obtained at LifeHopeandTruth.com/Discern. Contact us at info@DiscernMag.com.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to P.O. Box 3490, McKinney, TX 75070-8189

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**Publisher:** Church of God, a Worldwide Association, Inc., P.O. Box 3490, McKinney, TX 75070-8189; phone 972-521-7777; fax 972-521-7770; info@cogwa.org; LifeHopeandTruth.com; cogwa.org

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Donations to support *Discern* magazine and LifeHopeandTruth.com can be made online at LifeHopeandTruth.com/donate or by surface mail to Church of God, a Worldwide Association, Inc., P.O. Box 731480, Dallas, TX 75373-1480. The Church of God, a Worldwide Association, Inc. is organized and operated as a tax-exempt organization in the United States according to the requirements of IRS 501(c)(3). Contributions are gratefully acknowledged by receipt.

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## “THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT COME FIRST”

**The speech foresaw the future and correctly identified the core issue, but fell short of explaining what to do about it. We need a new declaration!**



“The things of the spirit come first. Unless we cling to that, all our material prosperity, overwhelming though it may appear, will turn to a barren scepter in our grasp. ... We must not sink into a pagan materialism.”

It was a speech extraordinary in vision but, unfortunately, weak in elaboration. It’s hard to talk about things of the spirit without talking about God, but Coolidge shied from that. He referred to God only obliquely when praising the founding fathers who “came under the

influence of a great spiritual development.” In fact, it was their Declaration to which we owed our wealth, he said.

### A “Declaration of Dependence”

Contrast that with another presidential speech given some decades earlier. Abraham Lincoln was hardly one to shy away. When proclaiming a national day of fasting in 1863, he boldly wrote, “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. ... But we have forgotten God.

“We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!”

He urged the nation’s citizens “to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”

Would any world leader speak like this today? Would any nation heed such a call? I fear not. But no matter where on earth we are, in nations great or small, these are the important things of the spirit we urgently need to address.

The entire world has walked independently of God for too long. We need today a new declaration, a “Declaration of Dependence,” the kind Lincoln spoke of: “It is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God.”

May we begin walking down that path!

Clyde Kilough  
Editor

Tuvalu. Svalbard and Jan Mayen. Comoros.

Even serious geography students might be baffled trying to pinpoint these locations! They mean a lot to us, however, because they represent the homes of subscribers of *Discern* and visitors to its parent website, [Life, Hope & Truth](#).

Our readers come from virtually every country and territory on earth (North Korea and Western Sahara being notable exceptions). By the way, Tuvalu is a tiny Polynesian island; Svalbard and Jan Mayen, an archipelago and remote island in the Arctic Ocean; and Comoros, an island country in the Indian Ocean.

Because of our global reach, we strive to transcend the diversity of the world’s politics, ideologies and cultures. In other words, although based in the United States, we try not to be America-centric, but address issues common to all humanity.

### “Unless we cling to that”


Nevertheless, the majority of our audience is from the U.S., and for better or worse, this nation does cast a huge shadow of influence over the entire world. So whether you are a U.S. citizen or a distant observer, it’s wise to watch this part of the world.

We at *Discern* monitor in particular the moral, philosophical and cultural path on which this nation is traveling, and our worry level is climbing. The root cause is one of those issues common to all humanity.

As the U.S. celebrates its 243rd birthday on July 4, it’s a good time to revisit a speech given 93 years ago on July 5, 1926, by President Calvin Coolidge. Historians generally regard Coolidge as an unremarkable president, but his words that day were remarkably prescient.

“We live in an age of science and of abounding accumulation of material things,” he told the crowd in Philadelphia commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. But he then warned,



A man and a woman are standing outdoors in a park-like setting, smiling and looking at each other. The man is wearing a white t-shirt under a plaid shirt, and the woman is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The background is a soft-focus green landscape with trees.

Whether you have someone special in your life right now or not, here are 10 questions to consider when it comes to choosing your future spouse.

By Jeremy Lallier

# 10 Questions to Ask Before You Get Married



# M

## arriage is a big deal.

In fact, with the exception of your relationship with God, it might be the most important, most life-altering, most far-reaching commitment you'll ever make in your entire life.

But the decision to commit to God through [baptism](#) is a little more clear-cut than the decision to get married. The overall question on the table with baptism is, "Are you going to commit to God's way of life or not?" With marriage, there's the added wrinkle of sorting out *who* you should make that commitment with, and *how* you can be sure he or she is the right person, and *what* you should be looking for to be sure.

What helps with that process is knowing the right questions to ask—which is why we've put together this list of 10 important questions to ask about the person you want to spend the rest of your life with.

Is this a comprehensive list of every question you'll ever have to consider before marriage? Not by a long shot. But it is a place to start—and if you're willing to answer these 10 questions honestly, they should leave you with a clearer picture of whether or not you're on the right track.

## 1 | Does he or she show you love and respect?

That might feel like an obvious question, but it's easy to mistake mutual attraction for mutual love and respect. Just because you like each other doesn't mean your relationship is anchored by these two essential qualities, so take some time to really think about it.

Paul told the congregation at Ephesus, "Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

We don't show love and respect by accident. They aren't things that just happen. To be consistent in these things, we have to be making a daily effort to express them—and to better understand what God says they mean. If the person you want to marry isn't actively showing you love and respect, then the foundation of your marriage will be crippled from day one.

## 2 | Are you moving toward the same goals?

Amos asked, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). By entering into the marriage covenant with someone, you're agreeing to walk alongside him or her for the rest of your shared lives.

What do you want out of marriage? What do you want your home life to look like? What are your career goals? If you're each looking toward different destinations in life, your marriage will feel the strain. But if you're both headed the same direction, working with the same goals in mind and operating by the same values, your relationship will blossom and grow in the process.

## 3 | How does he or she handle stressful situations?

It's easy to be the best version of ourselves when life is going well—and in the beginning of a

relationship, there will be a lot of easygoing, stress-free moments. It might even seem like things will always be that way—but that's not how it works. Life will inject stress into your relationship, and it's important to know how your potential spouse handles it.

Early in our relationship, my (then future) wife and I took a wrong turn during a road trip, which led us to a grid of under-construction city streets. After sunset. In an urban area neither of us had been in before.

It was an eye-opening experience because we both saw how the other handled unexpected stress. We made it out of there alive and (relatively) unscathed, and our budding relationship was stronger because of it.

"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty," says the book of Proverbs, "and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32). Marriage works better when the people in it know how to rule their spirits when times get tough—because they *will* get tough.

## 4 | How does he or she treat others?

One of the most important observations you can make about the person you'd like to marry is how he or she treats others—especially the ones who can't really do anything about it. Cashiers. Waiters and waitresses. Employees. Total strangers. Anonymous users on the Internet. When there's no repercussion for being rude or unkind, what kind of personality do you see on display?

Proverbs describes the ideal woman as someone who "extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy" (Proverbs



31:20), and Jesus gave us the Golden Rule: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them” (Matthew 7:12). Make sure your potential spouse is someone who extends kindness and compassion to others, even when there’s nothing to gain from it.

## 5 | What if nothing ever changes?

What’s the most annoying trait of your potential spouse-to-be?

Got it? Okay. Now, if that trait never changed—if you knew it was going to stay just as annoying and just as consistent for the rest of your human life—would you still want to marry this person?

It’s a dangerous game to go into marriage *expecting* your partner to change in a specific way. Sure, life is full of change, but for all you know, that specific trait might stay the same forever or even get worse. And if it does, are you going to be okay with that? Or is that a deal breaker? The marriage covenant is a very permanent thing (Matthew 19:9), so it’s important that we don’t bank on change that might never happen.

## 6 | How focused is he or she on self-improvement?

In contrast to the last question, being a Christian means being committed to change. Following God means seeking out where we’re falling short of His expectations and learning how to do better.

One of the qualities any potential spouse should have is the desire to improve as God reveals areas that need work. Make sure you’re looking to enter into marriage with someone who makes the effort to grow as a Christian.

## 7<sub>a</sub> | Women: Is this a man you can follow and support, even when you disagree with him?

Paul wrote an instruction that can be hard to swallow: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:22-24).

But there it is. In the marriage relationship, part of the wife’s role is to submit to her husband. Women, that doesn’t mean you’re not allowed to voice your concerns or express your hopes as your husband leads. It doesn’t mean you’re expected to become some kind of mindless slave or you’re expected to submit to things contrary to God’s instruction. But marriage does mean committing to following where your husband leads, even when you think another direction might work better.

Make sure you marry a man you’re not concerned about having to follow.

## 7<sub>b</sub> | Men: Is this a woman whose input you will value and consider, even when you disagree with her?

Paul had something to say to the husbands too: “Husbands, love your

wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25). It’s that last part that often gets overlooked. Men, our job is to love our wives *as Christ loves the Church*. That’s a deep kind of

When we lose sight of who should come first in our life, the other areas of our life are bound to come undone in the process.

love—a love filled with self-sacrifice and unflinching dedication. A husband should make decisions that place higher value on his wife and family than himself.

Even though it’s our responsibility to take the reins of the relationship, we’re not the boss or the dictator. We’re the husband, and we are to give “honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being *heirs together* of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7, emphasis added throughout).

Make sure you marry a woman whose thoughts and opinions will help you make better decisions as a leader.

## 8 | What’s his or her relationship with God like?

More tough words from Paul: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light



with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are

the temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

That’s not optional. That’s not a matter of preference. That’s not a suggestion, a hope or a best-case

scenario. This goes back to having the same goals. If the person you’re interested in doesn’t believe in God or in living His way of life, how can you expect to walk together?

## HOW YOU MIGHT BE RUINING YOUR MARRIAGE BEFORE IT EVEN STARTS

In many countries, around 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce.

That’s not a great success rate—especially when you consider that no one enters into marriage with the hope that the relationship will end in shambles.

Unfortunately, there are social norms and decisions people make every day that can make nurturing a healthy marriage increasingly difficult. What’s more, some of these can impact your future marriage long before you have a wedding date (or even a spouse) in mind.

If you want a strong marriage, here are two pitfalls to avoid—and why:

### Cohabitation

Moving in together is so common these days that it almost raises an eyebrow when two people decide *not* to live together before they get married. Most people look at cohabitation as a way to test-drive a marriage—to see if everything is satisfactory before making a big commitment.

Here’s why that’s a problem:

Marriage isn’t about everything working perfectly. In fact, if there’s one thing you can count on in marriage, it’s things not working perfectly. If you’re cohabiting—if you’re just two people living together, bound by nothing more than a feeling of affection—it’s a lot easier to walk away when things get tough.

Marriage—at least the kind of marriage God intended for us to have—is a binding commitment between two people. It’s an agreement that when things get difficult, the husband and the wife will put in the effort to make things work.

You can’t test-drive that kind of commitment.

More than that, God designed the sexual union to exist between a husband and wife exclusively. The Bible says, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4). Sex serves as a powerful bond between husband and wife—but the more potential marriages you try and test-drive, the more diluted that bond will be when you finally say, “I do.”

### Sexualized content

This one umbrella covers a lot of territory. Yes, we’re talking about outright pornography here, but also anything that uses the idea of sex as a selling point or in a provocative way. That includes everything from sex scenes in popular movies to advertisements that want you to focus less on the product and more on the attractive model displaying it.

Understand that the world is selling you a false (and largely impossible) concept of what sex is and how it works. The more you let that imagery in—the more you believe what the world tells you about how sex should look—the more disappointed and frustrated you’ll be when your own marriage fails to live up to those impossible expectations.

Sex is a fantastic, awesome gift designed by God to bolster and enhance a marriage, which is why Satan is eager to cheapen and trivialize it. You don’t have to be married to negatively impact your future marriage—but the good news is, the opposite is also true. You don’t have to be married to set your future marriage up for success. Making good decisions now—and avoiding the bad ones—can make all the difference later.

—Jeremy Lallier



Or if that belief or that way of life is just something on the back burner, something that gets pushed aside in favor of other things, do you think the command to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18) is going to be easier or harder for you?

Marry someone whose dedication to living God’s way of life inspires you to do a better job in your own life.

## 9 | Is he or she willing to put God before you?

Ah. Now we’re into really difficult territory. This isn’t the picture Hollywood paints when it talks about romance—or all those inspirational quotes on social media, for that matter. The world around us says that true love is finding someone who makes you the focal point of his or her entire universe, who puts you before anything else.

Marriage is a lot of things, but it shouldn’t be that. Not in a million years.

God was serious when He said, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). It wasn’t a joke. Nothing—*nothing*, not even your cherished wife or husband—is to come between you and your relationship with God (Deuteronomy 13:6-8).

Jesus also emphasized that God is to come first when He spoke His famous words, “But seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

When we lose sight of who should come first in our life, the other areas of our life are bound to come undone in the process. “All these things”—all the blessings and benefits of life, which include marriage—come second to God.

If you want a successful marriage, make sure you’re looking for

someone who will put God first—and you second.

## 10 | What’s your relationship with God like?

But then, all this assumes one very important point—that God matters to *you* too. That you’re making the effort to put Him first in *your* life. That *you* treat others with compassion. That *you’re* making the effort to improve and grow as a child of God. Because, well, it’s a two-way street—if you’re asking these questions about the person you want to marry, then hopefully the person you want to marry will be asking these same questions about you.

Whether you’ve had someone in mind as you’ve made your way through this list or you’re still searching for that special someone, one of the best things you can do is to start making sure you can measure up to the questions on this list too. It’s a lifelong project, and there’s always room for each of us to continue improving ourselves—both for our own sake and for our spouse’s.

The book of Proverbs tells us that “he who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22), and again, “Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD” (Proverbs 19:14).

Marriage, entered into by the right people and for the right reasons, is an incredible blessing from God, and it’s never too early (or too late) to start preparing for it.

Want more? Check out our articles “[5 Traits Men Should Look for in a Godly Woman](#)” and “[5 Traits Women Should Look for in a Godly Man](#).” **D**



# What You Need to Know About the SEXUAL REVOLUTION

One of the big trends that has shaped our modern world is the sexual revolution. How is it impacting you, and what does God say about it? What did God intend, and how will He solve the problems this revolution has brought about?

By Becky Sweat



Sex is an integral part of God's plan for marriage. God created sexual intimacy for human reproduction, as well as a medium for giving and receiving physical pleasure that bonds husbands and wives more closely together.

## Divine purposes give way to personal desires

Unfortunately, as a society, we've steered away from these divinely ordained purposes for sex. No longer is there any shame attached to premarital or extramarital sexual relations.

"Casual" sex, which is engaged in without any emotional connection or long-term commitment, has become increasingly accepted. Many people regard sexual intercourse simply as a way to have fun or to gratify their personal desires. If there's an unexpected pregnancy, abortion has become the standard way out of a difficult situation.

For people in Western countries who are in their 40s or younger, these things might not sound like anything out of the ordinary. They may even seem normal.

But anyone a little older will probably remember a time when

there was a stigma attached to being sexually active before marriage, having multiple sex partners or getting pregnant out of wedlock. There may have still been acts of fornication and adultery, but they weren't celebrated or condoned as they are today.

## When did the sexual revolution begin?

Sociologists generally point to the 1960s and 1970s as the decades when these changes in attitudes and conduct regarding sex—collectively known as the sexual revolution or sexual liberation—started taking root. Suddenly,



the standards relating to sexual morality, which had helped keep Western civilization together for the past several centuries, were being challenged and dismantled. It was the era of “free sex” and “if it feels good, do it.”

Numerous factors were at play to foster this movement. The first birth control pill came on the market in 1960, followed by the legalization of abortion in the United States in 1973. Both of these made sex outside of marriage seem less risky. Also in 1973, the Supreme Court ruled that nudity alone does not make printed publications legally obscene, boosting the pornography industry.

During the same time frame, several major psychological studies gained popular attention, including the Kinsey reports and the research of Masters and Johnson. These seemed to support the ideas of Sigmund Freud, who promulgated the belief that sexual repression was mentally and emotionally damaging.

Additionally, swinger clubs were popping up, providing venues for partner swapping and group sex. Filmmakers were producing adult erotic films, along with introducing new levels of sexual explicitness into mainstream movies. Sex shops (or adult bookstores) were also making their debut, distributing all the pornographic publications that were now being produced. By the late 1970s, sexual promiscuity was everywhere.

## The second phase of the sexual revolution

Today, the sexual revolution is still going strong. Every day we are bombarded by sexually immoral messages via the Internet, TV, movies, videos, advertisements,

books, magazines and music. Many of these messages ridicule any element of purity. Clothing styles and standard dress these days is revealing and seductive. Researchers tell us that recreational sex, infidelity, cohabitation and pornography are now more widely practiced and accepted than ever before.

But that’s not the end of it. The sexual revolution is branching out into new areas. We’re seeing a push for the public support of homosexuality and same-sex marriage, approval of transgender lifestyles, expansion of abortion rights and even sanctioning of pedophilia.

Developments in these areas are often viewed as comprising the *second phase* of the sexual revolution.

## Sexual liberation: one piece of the humanist puzzle

The sexual revolution hasn’t occurred in a vacuum. The movement is really an outgrowth of a broader ideology known as [secular humanism](#), which was covered in the last issue of *Discern*.

In a nutshell, secular humanism is a worldview that makes mankind, science and human reasoning the basis for all truth and ethics. The physical world is all that exists, humanists contend. They believe there is no God or spirit realm, hence no afterlife, no moral absolutes and no accountability to a higher power. The only real purpose they have for their lives is to live for the here and now and to gratify the self as much as possible.

The objectives of the sexual revolution are some of the primary goals of secular humanism: to eradicate the biblical codes of

Close to 60 million unborn babies have been aborted in the U.S. since abortion was legalized in 1973.

conduct for sexuality and marriage; to fight for so-called “reproductive freedoms”; and to bring the extramarital, nonheterosexual uses of sex and alternative lifestyles into the mainstream.

Both secular humanism and the sexual revolution offer people the “freedom” to engage in sex without any restrictions. This, they promise, will create harmony, happiness and a utopian world.

But that couldn’t be further from the truth.

## Effects of the sexual revolution

The sexual revolution has brought about untold harm and pain. Many of the serious problems we face as a society are the direct result of people making their own rules for sex and reproduction, rather than obeying God.

Leviticus 18 and 20 specify sexual practices that God prohibits, including premarital sex, homosexuality, public nakedness and voyeurism. Exodus 20:14 commands us to not commit adultery. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 6:18, charges us to “flee sexual immorality,” or put another way, to abstain from sexual activity outside of a husband-and-wife union. Abortion is covered by the command not to kill in Exodus 20:13 and the teaching in Exodus 21:22-25 that unborn babies are worthy of protection.

If we break any of these laws, we are, in effect, turning our backs on God. Nothing good can come from doing that.

## Casualties and consequences

We can see the fallout of the sexual revolution all around us:

- Since the 1960s, the divorce rate for marriages in the U.S. soared to around 50 percent. This increase has been largely attributed to marital partners engaging in extramarital sexual encounters, undermining their relationships.
- At least 40 percent of American teens are sexually active, and nearly half a million 15- to 19-year-old girls become pregnant each year. Some of them will give birth and try to raise their children on their own, but many will undergo an abortion.
- Close to 60 million unborn babies have been aborted in the U.S. since abortion was legalized in 1973—roughly 25 percent of all pregnancies.
- The number of divorces, along with the rise in out-of-wedlock births, has led to an increase in single-parent households (usually headed by mothers), which have doubled since the 1960s. Children raised in fatherless homes are at a higher risk for developing behavioral and mental disorders and are likely to live in poverty.
- Homosexual behavior and promiscuity in general have fueled the explosion of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The Centers for Disease Control estimates that each year 20 million Americans become infected

with STDs. Left untreated, STDs can cause serious long-term health problems.

- Studies report that two-thirds of American men view pornography at least once monthly. This practice is not only degrading to the people being viewed, it is also harmful to the consumers. Habitual pornography usage can lead to emotional withdrawal, anxiety, depression and divorce.

The bottom line is that when human beings misuse sex, they're almost always focusing on fulfilling their own selfish desires. In doing so, they devalue or hurt other people. Furthermore, the sexual act has now been reduced to nothing more than a biological urge—when it should be a means of expressing the deep love and commitment between a husband and wife.

## More than just a personal penalty

Not only has the sexual revolution harmed individuals and marriages, it also impacts the future of civilization. The sexual permissiveness we're seeing now is causing the breakdown of the family—the basic building block of a strong and healthy society.

In *The Global Sexual Revolution* Gabriele Kuby explains how the cultural revolution is dismantling families: “The concrete weapons in this war include deconstruction of male-female sexuality, alteration of the population's social norms and attitudes (especially among youth), complete legal equivalency of homosexual partnership with marriage, and even social ostracism and legal criminalization of any opposition to these new ‘norms.’”

Kuby says this process is astonishing, because it gets priority

treatment in the activities of the UN, the EU and many individual countries, even though it “makes no contribution to solving the great problems of our time. On the contrary! The epochal demographic shift will do more than just derail the social structure. ... It destroys the conditions that brought forth European high culture—a model of success for the entire world” (2015, p. 8).

A nation that doesn't safeguard the sanctity of human sexuality won't survive. Sexual sins weaken and destroy individuals, families and nations as a whole. History is replete with examples of crumbled empires that dismissed God's teachings on sex, marriage and family. When we involve ourselves in illicit sexual practices, there are dire consequences.

If people are promiscuous, they might suffer with STDs, failed relationships, etc. Not only that, God certainly won't bless a nation that makes a mockery of His design for sex, gender and marriage.

But while it doesn't make sense to disobey God, the truth is, immorality will only worsen in the years ahead. Revelation 9:21 and 2 Timothy 3:2-4 tell us that hedonism and sexual promiscuity will be prevalent right up until Christ's return.

In the meantime, we must strive to come out of the world and live pure lives. We can enjoy the benefits of living God's way now.

Certainly, it is sobering to see the damage that sexual “liberation” is doing. However, we can maintain a positive outlook, knowing that Christ will return to establish His wonderful Kingdom. Only then will this world experience true happiness and harmony. **D**



# What Is Eschatology (And Why Do You Need to

The study of events that will happen from now through the return of Christ and what will follow thereafter is vitally important. Why is learning about these end-time events so crucial for Christians?

By David Treybig

**E**schatology is the study of “last, or final matters, as death, the Judgment, the future state, etc.” ([Dictionary.com](#)). The term *eschatology* is derived from the Greek word *eschatos*, which means “last in time or in place” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*).

So what is so important about eschatology? Simply put, our understanding of the doctrines dealing with last things is a foundational component of our faith.

Having an understanding of the Bible’s teaching regarding end-time events gives us a basis for hope. With hope, the future we envision with God comes alive. This hope inspires us to dedicate our lives to our Creator and to live by His commands.

Hope is one of the key ingredients of faith, and the Bible has much to say about this Christian attribute. In the Old Testament the Psalms often admonish us to have hope in God, in His Word and in His mercy (Psalm 130:7, 5; 147:11).

Along similar lines, Jeremiah wrote, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose *hope* is the LORD” (Jeremiah 17:7, emphasis added throughout).

## The end times begin

The end time is a major topic of the Bible. Patriarchs and prophets in the Old Testament wrote of this age. Prior to his death, Jacob gathered his sons to tell them what would befall their descendants “in the *last days*” (Genesis 49:1). And Daniel recorded a prophecy of a conflict between a king of the South and a king of the North that would occur “at the *time of the end*” (Daniel 11:40).

So, when were these end times predicted to begin? Actually, they have already begun.

The book of Hebrews tells us that God “has in these last [*eschatos*] days spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:2). And on the Day of Pentecost, Peter told the crowds that they were seeing the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit would

“come to pass in the *last* [*eschatos*] days” (Acts 2:17).

In his epistle Peter also told the people of the first century that Jesus “was manifest [made visible] in these *last* [*eschatos*] times for you” (1 Peter 1:20).

From these passages, we see that the end times began at the first coming of Jesus. And we are much closer to the end now!

## End-time events

After Jesus gave a prophecy about the destruction of the temple, His disciples asked Him, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3).

The answers Jesus gave provide an excellent outline of eschatological events. These include religious deception, wars, famines, pestilences, tribulation, cosmic disturbances and His return. These seven events correspond to the [seven seals](#) found in the book of Revelation.

Adding to this eschatological frame, the Bible reveals that

# ogy? Know?)

in the last days leading up to Christ's return, people in general will become very selfish, proud and unholy. These are just a few of the traits mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

The Bible also predicts a future time of grave national decline for Jacob's descendants. This decline culminates in what Jeremiah described as "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). Careful study of Bible prophecy and history shows that this refers to the American and British peoples. For further study, see the article "[Jacob's Trouble: What Is It?](#)" and the free booklet *The United States, Britain and the Commonwealth in Prophecy*.

These troublous times for the English-speaking nations will spread to all nations and threaten the very existence of human life on this planet. As Jesus told His disciples, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were

shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22).

The book of Revelation adds that a civil power called the beast will lead a group of 10 nations in war against Christ when He returns (Revelation 17:12-14). Christ will be victorious, Satan will be bound, and a 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth will commence (Revelation 19:19-21; 20:1-4).

## The good news of eschatology

After Jesus returns, the earth will become peaceful and abundantly productive as people learn and follow God's instructions. After the 1,000 years have ended, people who never knew God's expectations will be brought back to life to have their opportunity for salvation.

God's seven annual holy days picture His plan of salvation for mankind. To learn more about these days of worship and their

meanings for us, see the booklet *From Holidays to Holy Days: God's Plan for You*.

There are many additional end-time events that could be added to this brief outline, and many of them are covered in the "Prophecy" section of Life, Hope & Truth. But now that we've considered an overview, let's note what Christ had to say about our study of eschatology—our focus on end-time events.

## The significance of eschatology for us

As Jesus finished answering His disciples' questions about His coming and the end of this current age, He gave them and us an important command. He said, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42).

Luke quotes Jesus saying, "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

The Greek words translated "watch" in these two passages mean to be awake, alert and vigilant. In short, watching end-time events unfold is a command from Christ that helps us remain faithful to God and focused on His coming Kingdom. For help staying up with world events and understanding their connection to biblical prophecies, continue reading *Discern* magazine and subscribe to our "[Insights Into News and Prophecy](#)" blog and our *Life, Hope & Truth Weekly Newsletter*, which includes World Watch Weekly. **D**



# The *Uniqueness* of the Bible



How is the Holy Bible different from other religious books? Do Christians need additional writings to augment their spiritual growth?

By David Treybig

**A**s a church pastor who regularly volunteers to serve on the staff at a teen summer camp, I often field questions from young people wanting to know more about the Bible. One evening a teen asked, “How do we know the Bible is the right book for us to be reading? What about other religious books, such as the Koran?”

This multipart question was sincere, honest and reflective of someone trying to sort through the feel-good, don’t-take-sides and validate-all-opinions philosophy that permeates much of society today. At the heart of the issue is the concern of whether Christians can trust the book upon which their faith is built. After all, it is this work that reveals who God is and what He is doing. It provides guidance for our lives and hope for the future.

From the outset, we should acknowledge that anyone who

doesn’t want to believe in the Bible can find plenty of seemingly good reasons for not doing so. Skeptics of the Bible have a host of arguments that at first glance seem credible. These range from claiming the Bible is full of contradictions to the belief it is unscientific to the perception that the God of the Bible shows favoritism and incites violence against others.

But when you actually study the Bible and dig a little deeper into its pages, you find that it does not contradict itself, that good science and accurate biblical interpretation agree, and that God loves humanity. (For further study, see [“God and Science”](#) and [“Science and the Bible.”](#))

For people of any age trying to sort through competing claims, the best question may be: Are there things about the Bible that give us valid reasons for trusting it as the Word of God and the foundation for our lives?

I believe the resounding answer is Yes. I believe there are multiple reasons for us to trust this amazing book.

Let’s consider some of the evidence that shows that the Bible is unique among all religious writings and worthy of our study and respect.

In terms of its organization, length of time in writing, number of human authors, consistency of its message, and the number of copies printed, the Bible has no equal. It is by far the best-selling and most popular book of all time. It is estimated that more than 6 billion copies have been printed in hundreds of languages. The second best-selling book is one containing the sayings of Mao Tse-tung, and by comparison, there are only approximately 900 million copies of this book in print.

### Authorship of the Bible

Although about 40 people are credited with writing the Bible’s 66 books over approximately 1,500 years, there is unprecedented consistency in its teachings. The reason for the Bible’s consistency is the fact that God Himself is its primary Author.

Explaining this point to Timothy, Paul wrote: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16). This is reflected in the fact that “more than 3,800 times words are introduced by such formulae as ‘The



Lord spoke,’ ‘Thus says the Lord’ and ‘The word of the Lord came’” (*Eerdmans’ Handbook to the Bible*, 1973, p. 33). Although each human author wrote in his own style, all recorded what God revealed to them either directly or via the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:10-12).

In the New Testament Jesus affirmed that God’s “word is truth” and that “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 17:17; 10:35). Affirming the same, Paul twice referred to the “*Holy Scriptures*” (Romans 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:15, emphasis added throughout). This is why modern Bibles, now including the New Testament, are titled the *Holy Bible*.

## Organization of the Bible

As one would expect because of its overall Author, the Bible is well organized (1 Corinthians 14:33). The Old Testament has three sections—the Law, the Prophets and the Writings—and the New Testament has four sections—the Gospels and Acts, the Epistles of Paul, the General Epistles and Revelation.

Comparing the Bible to other religious writings, the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (general editor Frank E. Gaebelein) says that the Koran’s “considerable borrowing from the Judeo-Christian Scriptures is indisputable. The Koran [approximately one-tenth the length of the Bible] is really the product of one man, Muhammad, whose fragmented writings were gathered after his death into a single book exasperatingly lacking in arrangement. ...

“The so-called sacred books of other religions, including the Book of Mormon, assume much less the character of a unified book than does the Bible, and their mythological features, questionable historical

particulars, and inconsistencies of religious perspective should put us on guard against speaking of ‘the Bibles of mankind’” (vol. 1, article “The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible”).

For additional study on the organization of the Bible, see “[Fascinating Bible Facts](#).”

## Preservation of the Bible

One of the most fascinating indications of the Bible’s authenticity is the story of its preservation. Its history begins with Moses’ writing the earliest portion of the Bible. He delivered it to the priests with the command that it be read to all Israel every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:9-11).

Even though the Jews were given the task of preserving “the oracles” of God (Romans 3:2), they didn’t always take this responsibility as seriously as they should have. Amazingly, God didn’t let these inspired writings disappear.

During the reign of King Josiah, who instituted a return to the worship of God, “the Book of the Law [was found] in the house of the LORD” (2 Kings 22:8). From this time forward, it seems that the Jews were more careful about preserving God’s Word.

When Ezra the priest returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, King Artaxerxes noted that Ezra was being sent “to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the *Law of your God which is in your hand*” (Ezra 7:14). After the Jews began rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, Nehemiah the governor, Ezra, and the Levites taught the people from “the *Book of the Law of Moses*, which the LORD had commanded Israel” during the annual holy days of the seventh month (Nehemiah 8:1-8).

Heaven and  
earth will pass  
away, but My  
words will by  
no means pass  
away.

In the third century B.C. work began on the Septuagint—a translation of the Bible into Greek for Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt. The name *Septuagint* means 70 and was derived from the number of translators involved in the project. (One legend holds that there were actually 72 translators, six men from each of the 12 tribes of Israel.) Although its original purpose was to aid the Jews in Alexandria, whose use of Hebrew was waning, it also served as additional protection of the Bible from those who might attempt to destroy it.

Subsequently, there appeared a Seleucid ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes (reigned 175-164 B.C.), who tried to exterminate the Jewish religion and have the Jews become Greeks. He forbade the Jews’ traditional worship and lifestyle and destroyed all copies of Scripture that he could find.

But such attempts did not succeed. In fact, the Bible has been carefully protected and preserved. The Dead Sea Scrolls, dated from around 200 B.C. to A.D. 68, were discovered in 1947. These discoveries confirm that we have the same Old Testament today as existed back then.

Space does not permit a detailed overview of the preservation of the New Testament, but one point is especially worthy of consideration. While giving a discourse on end-time events, Jesus clearly stated,

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35). Both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible have been accurately preserved for us today.

For further study, see [“Dead Sea Scrolls.”](#)

### Need for additional writings?

Some, who realize that no other works come close to the distinctive magnitude of the Bible, have suggested that other writings are simply additions to the Bible that offer greater insight or understanding. Interestingly, the Bible addresses this supposition.

Paul wrote Timothy that “all Scripture is given by inspiration

of God ... that the man of God may be *complete, thoroughly equipped* for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). In other words, all the instruction we need for how to live is found in the Bible. The Bible is not incomplete. For further study on what “Scripture” included, see the sidebar “Did the Apostles Consider Their Writings Part of the Bible?”

Concluding the book of Revelation, John wrote: “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: *If anyone adds to these things*, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things

which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

While this instruction not to add anything clearly applied to the book of Revelation, it may also be a concluding reminder. The command not to add to God’s words is not exclusive to Revelation—it can also be found in Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; and Proverbs 30:5-6.

Revelation describes the fulfillment of the end-time prophecies previously given throughout the Bible, serving as a fitting conclusion for the book God has preserved for us today.

There is no book like the Bible, for it is indeed the Word of God!

For further study on the veracity of the Bible, see the booklet [Is the Bible True?](#) **D**

## DID THE APOSTLES CONSIDER THEIR WRITINGS PART OF THE BIBLE?

When we read that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), the question arises, what did Paul mean by *Scripture*? While the Old Testament was clearly considered Scripture (the Old Testament is often quoted by Christ and the writers of the New Testament), did Paul and the apostles believe that their writings were also divinely inspired and that they were thus to be included as part of the Bible?

Paul and John specifically stated that their teaching was divinely inspired by God (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 John 4:6). This meant that their writings, which documented their teaching, were also from God.

Peter, who wrote 2 Peter around the same time as Paul wrote 2 Timothy, referred to Paul’s writings as part of the “Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15-16). Peter also reminded his readers to “be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy

prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 3:2).

Paul also makes a direct statement about the New Testament being Scripture. In writing to Timothy, Paul says, “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages’” (1 Timothy 5:18).

The latter quote “does not occur in so many words in the Old Testament, and yet the apostle adduces it evidently as a quotation from the Scriptures. ... It would seem probable, therefore, that he had seen the Gospel by Matthew or by Luke, and that he quoted this as a part of Scripture, and regarded the Book from which he made the quotation as of the same authority as the Old Testament” (*Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Whole Bible*).

These passages indicate that the apostles considered their writings to be Scripture.

—David Treybig



# INHUMANITY: ARE EVIL PEOPLE *Animals?*



We are repulsed when we see barbaric acts of inhumanity committed against other human beings. But the sad truth is we all are capable of violence and evil. What is the solution to the wickedness in our hearts?

By Isaac Khalil

In the aftermath of the March mass shootings in New Zealand, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said: “These people don’t deserve names. Names imply some sort of humanity. ... He’s not human. He doesn’t deserve a name.”

The idea is that the gunman who killed 50 people in the Christchurch mosques was so barbaric and abhorrent that he shouldn’t be identified as a human being. Mr. Morrison’s statement makes violent behavior seem like a radical anomaly in mankind’s history, but just a brief look at history shows that the recent Christchurch shootings were not an anomaly. They actually are part of a long line of inhumanity, violence and evil.

## **Man’s inhumanity to man**

Consider some other recent examples of violence in the news that haven’t gotten as much worldwide attention:

- **The Rohingya in Myanmar:** Rohingya Muslims are fleeing Myanmar (formerly Burma) by the thousands to escape violence against them by the Buddhist majority. There are now over 730,000 Rohingya living in refugee camps in Bangladesh.
- **Civil war in Sudan and South Sudan:** One of the first genocides of the 21st century occurred in Darfur, Sudan, a region in western Sudan where government-sponsored Arab militias continue to persecute and massacre the non-Arab

population. There was also terrible fighting in South Sudan, and the conclusion of the lengthy civil war in 2005 led to South Sudan gaining independence from Sudan in 2011. But not all the problems were solved, as South Sudan itself contains 60 different major ethnic groups. Just two years after independence, South Sudan fell into another ethnic civil war.

- **The Yazidis in Iraq and Syria:** In 2014 ISIS seized portions of northwestern Iraq and attempted to eliminate the Yazidis (a religious minority group in the region) by killing or enslaving them.

These and many other atrocities occurred in this 21st century. Much could be said about the mass violence of the 20th century as well, such

as the Holocaust; the many other barbaric acts of inhumanity during the two world wars; the genocides in Armenia, Rwanda, and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the killing fields of Cambodia; Chairman Mao's cultural revolution; the rape of Nanking and on and on it goes.

So the question is: Does committing mass violence make evil people lose their humanity (as Mr. Morrison said), or is violence actually a part of what humanity is at this present time?

Let's ask another question: Why is our history filled with violence? Is there something wrong with humanity?

## The problem is with the heart

The Bible reveals there is a serious problem with humankind. It's a problem of the heart.

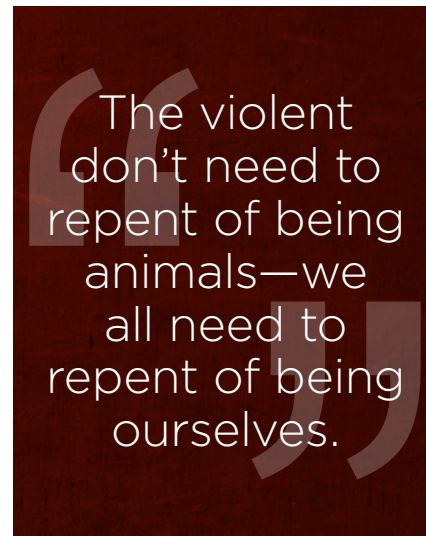
- The prophet Jeremiah describes our hearts as "deceitful" and "desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).
- God describes man's heart as "evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21) and "corrupt" (Psalm 53:3).
- The prophet Isaiah describes our righteousness, that is, what *we* consider to be good, as "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). In other words, human righteousness is inadequate in God's eyes.
- The Proverbs warn us against trusting our hearts (Proverbs 28:26).
- Solomon describes our hearts as being "full of evil" (Ecclesiastes 9:3).

As human beings, we can find it hard to read these passages. After all, *we* are the subject matter, and we don't want to consider ourselves as evil people. These verses don't describe sin and wickedness as an anomaly that makes a person less human. They describe a selfish human nature as being at the core of what we all are.

Certainly most of us won't commit mass murder. But notice what the apostle John said: "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15; see also Jesus' words in Matthew 5:21-22).

## How we became this way

How did humanity become this way? The Bible reveals that we were neither created nor born evil. We have *become* this way, and it all goes back to the Garden of Eden. God presented Adam and Eve two *ways* of life, symbolized by two trees—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9).



They disobeyed God's command and listened to the cunning lies of Satan (Genesis 2:17; 3:4-6). At that point their eyes were opened to alternative ways of thinking, and God cut off access to the tree of life (Genesis 3:7, 23-24). Since then, humans have been deciding for themselves what is good and evil—and what is right and wrong.

It wasn't long afterward that Cain killed his brother Abel and started mankind's long history of violence (Genesis 4:8). The recent shootings in

Christchurch, New Zealand, were just the most recent of countless violent acts, which can all be traced back to the Garden of Eden.

No, that shooter wasn't an animal. He was very much a human being (though perhaps one influenced by the evil spirit world). Animals don't kill out of hatred—they kill out of instinct and self-preservation. It is only humans who kill out of hatred.

But will it always be this way?

## Fixing the heart

The solution to these endemic human problems won't come from us fixing ourselves. The prophet Ezekiel recorded what God will do to change this: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). God continued, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (verse 37).

This is the key.

*We need a new heart.*

It is only by this new heart that we can fully obey God's laws and practice His way of love for God and other people (Matthew 22:37-40). We can only receive this new spirit through the Holy Spirit, which empowers us to obey His laws (Hebrews 8:10; Acts 5:32).

Solomon knew the condition of our hearts. He wrote that when we recognize the "plague of [our] own heart," we are to turn to God in prayer and ask for forgiveness (1 Kings 8:38-39; see also Ezekiel 18:32; 1 John 1:9).

No, the violent don't need to repent of being animals—we all need to repent of being *ourselves*.

That's the first step to becoming less human and more like God.

Learn more in our free booklet [\*Why Does God Allow Evil and Suffering?\*](#) **D**





# "When Our Creator Decides It Is Time"

**We're suffering.  
Humanity is  
hurting. And  
no solution is in  
sight. Is it ever  
going to stop,  
and is there  
anything you  
can do?**

**By Clyde Kilough**

**A** couple of days after the March 15, 2019, mass killings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, as my wife walked toward a grocery store, she passed a woman loading her shopping bags into her car. Noticing that the lady wore a hijab, the head covering typically worn by Muslim women, she stopped and asked if she was Muslim. When the lady nodded yes, my wife said, "I'm so sorry for

what happened in New Zealand." The lady said thank you, but began to softly cry and started talking.

"Why does this keep happening?" she asked. It was a rhetorical question, one born out of frustration and emotion, but not really in expectation of an answer. So my wife just listened. All over the world, the lady continued through her tears, people of all different nationalities, religions and races are killing each other. Why? What's wrong with us? Why are we doing this?

Finally she asked, "When is it all going to stop?"

At that point my wife offered a simple answer, "It will stop when our Creator decides it is time to come and end it."

The other lady nodded and said, "You are right," and they went their separate ways. They were two strangers, of two totally different faiths, but having in common a basic compassion over human suffering, and a sadness over the state of the world.

## Going further down the path

Were they to meet again today, they could repeat the same conversation, only with even more anguish.

Five weeks later, as I write, Sri Lanka is mourning the hundreds killed and injured in the Easter Sunday church and hotel bombings. ISIS claims responsibility, declaring it to be in retaliation for the New Zealand shootings. As if that somehow means justice has been served.

No, all it really means is that we are further down the path Jesus Christ warned we would walk before God's justice is served.

In one of history's most famous prophecies, answering His disciples' question, "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" one of Jesus' key indicators was, "Because lawlessness [wickedness, contempt and violation of law, sin] will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:3, 12).

God does not want our love to grow cold. He wants us to care deeply about the world as He does. But Jesus knew what lawlessness would produce in the world. Take any area of life, and ask yourself: Are we progressing toward peace, love and harmony, or are we growing colder?

It is only going to worsen, Jesus said. Eventually we will bring upon ourselves a time of "great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." Conditions will ultimately become so bad that "unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved" (verses 21-22).

In other words, left to ourselves, we have no hope of being able to reverse course on the road to destruction that we humans have chosen to travel.

The good news is, however, that we are not left to ourselves!

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.'

Despite the bleak near future, our Creator also gave this promise: "For the elect's sake those days will be shortened." It will stop when He decides it is time to come and end it.

## Be ready!

Yes, God assures us He will deliver us "from the bondage of corruption" (Romans 8:21), but until that happens, "we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now" (verse 22).

Many of the Bible's most important prophecies are dedicated to explaining how both the pain and the delivery will unfold. A great way to begin understanding exactly how and why God is going to intervene in human affairs is to read our booklet *The Book of Revelation: The Storm Before the Calm*.

"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming," Jesus warned (Matthew 24:42). Can you afford to be unaware of what is coming and what you can do about it? Download your free copy of this booklet at [info.LifeHopeandTruth.com/revelation](http://info.LifeHopeandTruth.com/revelation).

Furthermore, He continued, "You also be ready, for the Son of Man is

coming at an hour you do not expect" (verse 44). You and I cannot stop the violence that is happening in our world. You and I cannot stem our society's slide into immorality. But you and I can be ready when our Creator decides it is time to come and end it!

## Time for you to decide

Christ painted a remarkable picture of the future for His servant John in the book of Revelation. In chapter 11 we read of the time when He—"the One who is and who was and who is to come"—returns to this earth (verse 17). John describes in verse 15 there being "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!'"

But the world will not welcome Him with opened arms. Notice the next statement: "The nations were angry"—angry with God! Why? Because elsewhere in Revelation we're told the world will hate God's condemnation of its sins and His call to repent of our evil deeds.

Few will heed. In fact, humanity's anger toward God will be so aroused that the nations of the earth will gather to fight Christ at His second coming. But He will prevail.

In the meantime, those who understand what is coming will heed the warning of Revelation 18:4-5. In the midst of describing the end-time society, John wrote, "And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.'"

This world's suffering will stop when our Creator decides it is time to come!

But isn't it time now for you to decide to come out of this world? **D**



# CHRISTIANITY IN PROGRESS

## God's Anger Questionnaire (Learning the Difference Between Righteous and Unrighteous Anger)

Tired of your anger hurting yourself and others? God's questions about anger may be helpful in dealing with this timeless human problem.

By Eddie Foster

**H**ave you ever accidentally butted heads with someone? Sometimes my young daughter flails her body a little too uncontrollably when playing, and our heads connect in a less-than-pleasant way.

What about on purpose, though? Have you ever *intentionally* butted heads with someone? Unless you are a mixed martial arts fighter or a goat, probably not.

But so much of the anger people express every day seems like an intentional headbutt—and so often it ends up in a painful, lose-lose situation for us and the person we are angry with.

How can we control and avoid anger in a world where outrage and violence are becoming more prevalent?

Throughout the Bible, God asked people questions about their anger. These questions can help us determine whether our anger is closer to a righteous indignation that isn't a sin, or a lose-lose temper tantrum that is.

### God's anger questionnaire

#### 1. "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?" (Genesis 4:6).

God asked this question to Cain when he became angry that God hadn't accepted his offering, but had accepted his brother's offering instead. Cain allowed his anger to fester and provoke him to eventually murder his brother.

Anger is often referred to as a secondary emotion, which means it

doesn't just appear out of nowhere. A specific trigger or primary emotion is usually behind the anger.

Righteous indignation comes from a primary emotion of zeal for God and is compatible with the fruit of His Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

On the other hand, why was Cain angry? He was jealous and envious, two triggers that come from a different list—the carnal works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Outbursts of wrath are included in this list, as well as other familiar reasons for unrighteous anger, such as selfish ambition and hatred.

Here are some practical tips for examining why we are angry:

- Analyze the situation, perhaps through journaling, and identify the plausible trigger for the anger you feel. Were you snubbed?

Did someone make an unkind comment? Comparing past experiences of when we've been angry and noting similarities and differences can be helpful.

- Question your first gut-reaction answer: "I was obviously angry because of an injustice." We naturally want to be right and be righteous, but on examination we might realize that we were simply full of selfish anger.

*So, first we must ask ourselves why we are becoming angry, and answer honestly. This may require some wise counsel from others who have witnessed our anger in the past.*

## 2. "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4).

God asked this question of the prophet Jonah when he became angry that God didn't destroy the sinful city of Nineveh after the people repented of their sins. Jonah didn't seem to care and actually asked God to let him die, if this was how things were going to be.

Is it right for us to be angry if our motivation has nothing to do with zeal for God and our anger is definitely not compatible with the

fruit of the Spirit? Jonah thought he was right to be angry that God didn't destroy an entire city that repented. Do we sometimes feel we are right to be angry when God would wholeheartedly disagree?

Some questions to ask ourselves in determining if it is indeed right for us to be angry can include:

- What makes me think God approves and is happy with my anger right now?
- If I wasn't angry right now, would that be better for me and others?

*After we know why we became angry, we can further analyze if it is right that we are angry based on our motivation, the situation and comparing the fruit of the Spirit with the works of the flesh. Again, it would be wise to seek counsel from others who don't have a vested interest in being an echo chamber for us.*

## 3. "Is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?" (Ezekiel 18:29).

God asked this question to the ancient Israelites, when they described God's judgment as unfair, despite their nation being mired in terrible sins.

Much of the time, anger comes from a feeling of being treated unfairly

or unjustly. But life in this world is not fair. We humans are experts at treating each other unfairly. And part of God's plan is allowing humanity to make its own choices—to experience the fruit of its own unfairness—but not forever. God's justice and mercy will prevail in the end.

Was whatever caused us to be angry our version of unfair or *God's* version of unfair?

Some things to consider:

- What is objectively fair? Not fair to you or fair to the other party, but fair in the eyes of God?
- If we got what we thought was fair, would others see it as a conflict of interest?
- Is our appeal to fairness really a cloak for selfishness?

*Even if we know why we are angry and why we feel it is right to be, we still might have to ask ourselves about our concept of fairness. This requires godly wisdom (James 3:17), especially to avoid hypocrisy and selfish partiality in what we think is fair.*

## Problem solved? Not hardly

A Christian's effort to overcome destructive anger is a work in progress. On this road to being angry but not sinning, hopefully the questions God has posed can help us think about why we are angry, whether it is right for us to be angry and what standard of fairness we may be basing our anger on.

Answering these questions honestly can save us, and those we are angry with, a lot of pain.

At any rate, this approach works a lot better than a headbutt.

This has just scratched the surface of this serious problem. Study it further in our articles "[What Does the Bible Say About Anger?](#)" and "[A Foothold for the Devil.](#)" **D**







# BIG DATA MEETS

Repressive dictatorships around the globe today are fusing emerging digital technologies to model the massive “social credit” project emanating from Beijing. What are the prophetic implications of these coercive technologies that seek to quash dissent and change behavior?

By Neal Hogberg

**J**ust after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, Ronald Reagan declared that “the Goliath of totalitarianism will be brought down by the David of the microchip.” And, thanks to innovations from Silicon Valley, the digital revolution did indeed become a great liberalizer through the rapid sharing of ideas.

In recent years, however, many nations have been moving in a very different direction, where information is power, but power concentrated in the hands of the state.

## **Everybody gets a score**

The Communist Party in China, long obsessed with forms of social control, five years ago drew up an ambitious blueprint for a nationwide social credit system (SCS). Across the vast country of 1.4 billion citizens, it aims, by the end of 2020, to assign all citizens a rating based on how they behave at work, in public venues and in their financial dealings.

Armed with unprecedented capabilities to monitor, track and

surveil everyone, authorities are amassing what could become the world’s largest data set, pulling together information held by the government and private companies to create what *The Economist* has called “the world’s first digital totalitarian state” (“China Invents the Digital Totalitarian State,” Dec. 17, 2016).

## **Tools for good or evil**

We live in an increasingly data-driven world, where more than 30 billion devices are expected to be connected to the Internet by 2020. Numerous technology breakthroughs, ranging from artificial intelligence (AI) systems to biometrics and improved algorithms, have all been propelled by ultrafast computing and data transmission speeds. These are enabling the exploitation of what has been called “big data”—colossal amounts of data that can reveal patterns, trends and associations.

While consumers value data speed as essential to operating everything from GPS to smartphones to movie

streaming, authoritarian governments can exploit these same technologies to serve their own ideologies.

## **You are being watched**

Ingenious Chinese technology makes possible “smart cities” like Yinchuan, where commuters can use facial identification to board a bus, or Hangzhou, where “smile to pay” facial data can be used to purchase a meal at KFC.

But the overriding goal of all the technological wizardry is quite different. “The government’s objective,” says Maya Wang, China senior researcher at Human Rights Watch, “is to precisely engineer people’s behavior to ensure the Chinese Communist Party maintains indefinite control, and it’s straight up from Orwell” (quoted in “China Uber-Rates Its Citizens,” *The Telegraph*, May 6, 2019).

According to experts, this sophisticated new set of technologies—some of them now maturing, others poised to emerge over the coming decade—will make all past efforts to spread propaganda

# BIG BROTHER IN CHINA

and quash dissent look primitive. They will make defiance of the government almost impossible.

China already spends an estimated \$200 billion a year on domestic security, with the primary tool being facial recognition systems. Face prints can be instantly compared across a vast database. Development of cheap, easy and fast identification is at the core of the unprecedented social credit system.

China defends the social credit system by insisting it is necessary to root out the pervasive problem of corruption and to modernize a largely agrarian society where most people still have no financial credit rating.

## Trustworthiness scoring

Chinese officials believe that by implementing the incredibly sophisticated surveillance system—by 2020 there will be 626 million cameras throughout the country—they will be able to shape behavior through a reward-punishment structure that aims to rate everyone's "trustworthiness."

The opaque methodology of trustworthiness scoring is secret, but examples of infractions include bad driving, smoking in nonsmoking zones, sitting in a reserved seat on a train, buying too many video games or posting fake news online. Penalties are assessed for infractions as minor as walking a dog without a leash and jaywalking.

High scores are already a requirement for anyone hoping to get the best housing, install the fastest Internet speeds, put their kids into the most prestigious schools or land the most lucrative jobs.

## Restricted everywhere

Conversely, this dystopian system of ostracism and social pressure is designed to completely eliminate mobility—social, class or travel—for those who do not follow the government's definition of a model citizen.

A common slogan in China is, "Whoever violates the rules somewhere shall be restricted everywhere." Sure enough, through

the end of 2018, more than 17 million flights and 5.5 million high-speed rail trips were denied to would-be travelers who found themselves on the SCS blacklist deemed as untrustworthy.

"Discredited" Chinese citizens face negatives that go far beyond financial and travel restrictions. The *South China Morning Post* pointed out the indignities—some big, some small—that are heaped upon the *laolai* (blacklisted). They're shunned by relatives and business associates, forced to ride on special slow trains, banned from renting hotel rooms and, most bizarrely, forced to use a special ringtone that embarrasses them every time they receive a phone call in public ("Life as One of China's 13 Million 'Deadbeats,'" March 26, 2019).

According to Australia's ABC News, another "naming and shaming" tool is an app running on WeChat that generates a map with a radar-style graphic overlay that "pings" every *laolai* around the user. The app is commonly known as the "Deadbeat Map" (Jan. 23, 2019).



## War with different weapons

The autonomous region of Xinjiang in northwest China, with a population of 25 million people, just under half of whom are Turkic Uighur Muslims, presents a chilling case study of the social credit system on steroids.

“China’s version of the ‘war on terror,’” according to *The Guardian*, “depends less on drones and strikes by elite military units than facial recognition software and machine learning algorithms. Its targets are not foreigners but domestic minority populations who appear to threaten the Chinese Communist party’s authoritarian rule” (“China’s Hi-Tech War on Its Muslim Minority,” April 11, 2019).

In 2014, following years of political strife, the Xi administration declared a state of emergency in Xinjiang and launched the “Strike Hard Campaign,” turning the entire region into what many consider an open-air prison and a laboratory for using innovative technologies to control people.

Almost overnight the Xinjiang security industry mushroomed from a handful of private firms to approximately 1,400 companies. The province serves, according to *Foreign Policy*, “as a testing ground for new technologies of surveillance that might render this process cheaper and more efficient for the state” (“U.S. Firms Are Helping Build China’s Orwellian State,” March 19, 2019).

## Watching, filtering, arresting

According to Human Rights Watch, a coercive program known as “Physicals for All” enabled authorities to amass a vast collection of biometric data, including DNA samples, images of irises and even voice samples from all residents aged 12 to 65. High-definition

facial signatures were created by scanning every individual from a variety of different angles as they made numerous facial expressions.

All Uighurs are required to install “nanny apps” that monitor everything they say, read and write, as well as everyone they connect with. That smartphone data is instantly cross-examined for suspect patterns by the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP) that aggregates, in real time, all archived details and data vacuumed up from the unrelenting video surveillance, biometric checkpoints and electronic devices.

While constantly “learning” from the behaviors of the Uighurs it watches, the IJOP flags “micro-clue” transgressions ranging from religious speech, prayer or instruction of children to more mundane items like not socializing with neighbors, using more electricity than “normal,” showing a lack of fervor in using Mandarin or failure to attend nationalistic flag-raising ceremonies.

The information gathered by all of these tools and analyzed by increasingly powerful AI and data processing means absolute control and little freedom. Any attempt by Uighurs to enter public institutions such as hospitals, banks, parks or shopping centers, or to cross beyond the boundaries of their local police precinct, immediately triggers the IJOP to alert police.

The intrusion into daily life is so all-encompassing that, *New York Times* opinion writer James Millward says, “when Uighurs buy a kitchen knife, their ID data is etched on the blade as a QR code” (“What It’s Like to Live in a Surveillance State,” Feb. 3, 2018).

## Coercively shaping behavior

“Because of the crackdown,” *The Guardian* says, “officials have seen a

profound diminishment of Islamic belief and political resistance in Uighur social life. They’re proud of the fervor with which Uighurs are learning the ‘common language’ of the country, abandoning Islamic holy days and embracing Han cultural values. From their perspective, the implementation of the new security systems has been a monumental success.”

China and its surveillance technology clients are only the beginning. Other companies and nations are developing and employing sophisticated methods of identifying and tracking individuals.

Fear of the surveillance state—as up to 2 million Uighurs have been placed in camps—has become a force multiplier in Xinjiang since the people know they have no privacy rights. Uighurs have “adapted their behaviour, and slowly even their thoughts, to the system” (April 11, 2019).

## The silk road of surveillance capitalism

China is striving to become an artificial intelligence powerhouse by

2030. It is now pushing its surveillance technology to like-minded governments around the world in what Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch, calls “Christmas for repressive regimes” (quoted by CBC Radio, Nov. 30, 2018).

A 2018 report from Freedom House accused China of remaking “the world in its techno-dystopian image.” *The Wall Street Journal* noted that “dictators from Caracas to Pyongyang will seek to exploit the enormous potential for political misuse inherent in the emerging technologies, just as they have over the decades with radio, television and the internet itself” (“The Autocrat’s New Tool Kit,” March 15, 2019).

As more of the world’s critical telecommunications infrastructure is built by China, it is leveraging its massive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to spread this sophisticated technology. Because 60 percent of the world’s Muslim-majority nations have signed up to be part of China’s BRI, there is “unlimited market potential” for the type of surveillance technology emerging from Xinjiang.

## **Selling security**

In 2018 the Chinese tech firm CloudWalk finalized an agreement with the virtually bankrupt government of Zimbabwe to build a national mass facial recognition program in order to address “social security issues.”

The Egyptian government plans to relocate from Cairo later this year to a new capital that will have, according to officials, “cameras and sensors everywhere,” with “a command center to control the entire city” (“The Autocrat’s New Tool Kit,”).

Pakistan has plans for “smart cities,” featuring extensive surveillance technology built directly into the infrastructure. Officials in Kenya

and Argentina are also exploring purchases of advanced Chinese AI and facial recognition systems.

Meanwhile Russia is ahead of the pack, with Moscow already boasting of 5,000 cameras installed with facial recognition technology that can rapidly access photos from passport databases, police files and social media.

But China and its surveillance technology clients are only the beginning. Other companies and nations are developing and employing sophisticated methods of identifying and tracking individuals. Nightmare scenarios are becoming more real by the day.

## **End-time political police state prophesied**

Bible prophecy reveals a future time, before Jesus Christ returns to this war-torn earth, when a great superpower will rise in Europe. It will be a revival of the Roman Empire, and it will be a political, military and economic marvel that will undoubtedly have all the modern technological wizardry to command unquestioned loyalty and worship of both the system and leaders (Revelation 13:7-8).

The Bible likens it to a ferocious beast that will inspire a fearful dread. Many will wonder, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” (verse 4). Authorities will wield vast economic power, with control over who is allowed to buy or sell (verses 15-18).

But, like all human governments, it is bound to fail! It will make war with the returning Jesus Christ and be utterly defeated.

Christ will then establish His government, one that will not need biometrics, a social credit system or the surveillance apparatus of a police state. There will be no fear of it being overthrown or losing power (Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; Revelation 11:15).

Humanly devised computer algorithms and facial recognition will not determine trustworthiness in the future government of God. He will look upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7; Acts 13:22) and judge with justice and mercy (Isaiah 16:5). God desires for all to be saved, and He will enter the names of the righteous into the Book of Life (Revelation 21:27).

When Christ returns, He will show the way of righteous government by example (Isaiah 2:2-4; Psalm 119:165). The prophet Isaiah provides an inspiring depiction of that future government of God: “Of His government and peace there will be no end” because He will “establish it with judgment and justice” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Scripture also tells us, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan” (Proverbs 29:2).

That is why the future King of Kings, Jesus Christ, was careful to instruct His disciples about the pitfalls of human governance: “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them” (Mark 10:42, New Living Translation).

The rulers of that day—like many today—found the desire to dominate, manipulate and control their subjects to be irresistible. That is why the Bible tells us, “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help” (Psalm 146:3).

Thankfully, there is a righteous government coming! Until that day, put your faith in God.

Study more about the Bible’s warnings for the end time by downloading our free booklet [\*The Book of Revelation: The Storm Before the Calm\*](#). Read more about the utopian government of God that will follow in our booklet [\*The Mystery of the Kingdom\*](#). **D**



***Rufous Hummingbird—the Miniature  
Migratory Master of the Skies***

The Rufous hummingbird is small even compared to other hummingbirds. But its migration path is huge. It nests farther north than any other hummingbird, as far as south-central Alaska, while its wintering grounds are in southern Mexico. Potentially, that's a journey of nearly 4,000 miles!

It's the longest migration route of any hummingbird. When measured by comparison with its tiny body size (just 3.1 inches, and weighing no more than a few paper clips), the Rufous hummingbird makes one of the longest migrations of any bird on earth. It would be like a 6-foot-tall man traveling 92,903 miles—enough to circle the earth 3.7 times—and doing that twice each year!

How can these birds accomplish such a long-distance feat? Beating their wings at an average 62 times per second and having a supercharged metabolism requires a lot of energy. They are helped by having excellent memories, often taking the same route year after year, stopping at the same flower beds and feeders along the way. This memory serves them well on their migration journey, allowing them to know where to find food and shelter.



Pictured here: Rufous hummingbird  
(*Selasphorus rufus*)

Photo and text by James Capo

# Wonders of GOD'S Creation



# DID JESUS TEACH ALL 10 COMMANDMENTS? PART 2

Last issue we explored the first four commandments and showed that Jesus taught all of them. Did He also teach and practice all of the last six?

By Erik Jones

In our last article, we saw that Jesus reaffirmed each of the first four of the 10 Commandments—which show how to love God—by word and example.

But what about the last six—which teach us how to show love toward other people?

## **Fifth Commandment: “Honor your father and your mother”**

This commandment teaches us to respect and honor our parents and, in a more general sense, to respect and uphold the family structure that God instituted (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24).

Jesus used this commandment to point out that though the Pharisees meticulously obeyed human traditions, they were much more careless about the commands of God. “For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and mother’” (Matthew

15:4). Jesus then said their tradition to get around caring for their parents “made the commandment of God of no effect” (verse 6).

Later, when asked what a person needed to do to live forever, He again included this commandment in His answer (Matthew 19:19). He also personally showed honor to His parents (Luke 2:51) and took care of His mother (John 19:25-27).

The Fifth Commandment, designed to uphold the God-ordained family structure, is clearly still to be obeyed.

## **Sixth Commandment: “You shall not murder”**

This teaches us not to take a human life. But the spiritual intent goes much deeper. The core principle teaches us to *love* and *deeply value* human beings.

Jesus cited this commandment as an example of His magnification of

God’s law (prophesied in Isaiah 42:21). He said, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. ... But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matthew 5:21-22).

Jesus reaffirmed the law against physical murder and also taught that the intent goes deeper into the mind.

The Sixth Commandment is designed to replace anger and hostility with love. Jesus elaborated on this when He said we are to love even our *enemies* (verse 44). Later Jesus’ close friend John wrote, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15).

The Sixth Commandment is designed to help us develop God’s core characteristic of love and is plainly still to be obeyed today.





## 10th Commandment: “You shall not covet”

This commandment directly deals with the mind and intentions. The command against coveting hits the core motivation of nearly every sin—self-focused desire.

Jesus called covetousness one of the “evil thoughts” that come from within (Mark 7:21-23). When asked to deal with an inheritance dispute, He warned, “Beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15).

This gets to the heart of the 10th Commandment—to direct our innermost thoughts and desires to the *spiritual things of God instead of the physical things of this world* (Matthew 6:19-21, 33; 2 Corinthians 4:18).

The apostle Paul connected covetousness to idolatry (Colossians 3:5). By connecting the 10th Commandment to the First and Second, he showed that all 10 form a unified circuit.

The 10th Commandment is also still to be obeyed today.

## The 10 stand

In our recent articles for this column we have examined the 10 Commandments from multiple angles. When we consider all that Jesus said about the 10 Commandments, how He lived His life and what He taught about them individually, we discover that the 10 Commandments clearly remain as the core laws and principles designed to govern a Christian’s life.

When obeyed, the 10 Commandments lead to happiness, peace and spiritual success.

To learn more about these important laws and how they can change your life, please download our free booklet *God’s 10 Commandments: Still Relevant Today*. **D**

## Seventh Commandment: “You shall not commit adultery”

This commandment addresses marital faithfulness and much more. It is also designed to protect the sanctity of the God-ordained institution of marriage and to govern human sexuality.

Jesus directly reaffirmed this commandment: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28).

Jesus magnified this commandment to apply to the mind. He also cited this commandment in a discussion of divorce. He taught that it was adultery to marry a divorced person who was still married in God’s sight (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

Later, Christ’s apostles also wrote about the seriousness of adultery (Galatians 5:19; 2 Peter 2:13-14). The Seventh Commandment is also still to be obeyed today.

## Eighth Commandment: “You shall not steal”

This commandment is far more than just a law protecting property rights. The spirit of this law teaches a Christian that instead of desiring to *take*, we should *give*.

Jesus reaffirmed this commandment (Matthew 19:18), and He revealed the spirit of this law in

John 10:10: “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” Jesus came to this earth to set an example of *serving* and *giving* (Matthew 20:28).

His disciples taught this same way of life (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). In fact, the apostle Paul wrote, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working ... that he may have something to give him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28).

The Eighth Commandment is still to be obeyed today.

## Ninth Commandment: “You shall not bear false witness”

The spirit of this law teaches us that instead of telling lies, we should always speak the truth. A Christian’s word should be completely trustworthy and reliable.

Jesus also reaffirmed this command (Luke 18:20). In John 8:44 He traced lying back to its source, Satan: “There is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

Jesus also said that lying defiles a person (Matthew 15:18-20). Christians are to be people like Christ who always speak the truth (Ephesians 4:15, 25; 1 Timothy 2:7). Even Jesus’ detractors acknowledged that He spoke truth (Matthew 22:16).

The Ninth Commandment is still to be obeyed today.

## They Shall Carry Out Great Exploits

One of the great military exploits of World War II was carried out on a cliff top on the coast of Normandy. It reminded me of an end-time prophecy that might well concern us all.

**■** MOST OF THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY SHOW no sign of the violence that happened here on June 6, 1944, 75 years ago. It was here that the greatest seaborne invasion in history began taking Western Europe back from the evil of Nazi Germany.

The Pointe du Hoc, however, vividly preserves the scars of war. This 100-foot-high promontory, jutting into the English Channel, overlooks the American-assigned beaches designated *Omaha* to the east and *Utah* to the west. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, in charge of coastal defense, stationed heavy artillery in concrete bunkers here to dominate both sectors.

The Allies were understandably concerned, carrying out aerial bombardments in April, May and early June. At dawn on June 6, the battleship USS *Texas* fired 255 14-inch shells on the strongpoint.

### An impossible mission?

The German defenders and many Allied officers, initially including the officer assigned to command the assault, believed the point could not be taken from the sea; it was a suicide mission. One intelligence officer stated, “Three old women with brooms could keep the Rangers from climbing that cliff.”

Suicide or no, taking the strongpoint was considered crucial to the invasion.

So, while under heavy fire, 225 U.S. Army Rangers, specifically trained for the mission, scaled the cliffs using ladders and ropes, as the *Texas* helped keep German heads down.

Against all odds, the doomed assault succeeded, destroying the big guns. The cost of holding the site against counterattacks, however, was high. Only 90 Rangers could still fight at the end of the two-day action, and only 40 had not been wounded.

Today a walk among the bunkers of the battlefield staggers the imagination. The landscape is lunar. Shell craters could swallow houses; concrete fortifications are shattered like pottery. Everywhere pockmarks from



small arms fire and grenade explosions witness to the magnitude of the maelstrom. I wondered, how could mere men accomplish such a feat?

Capturing the Pointe du Hoc was certainly one of the most memorable exploits of the war. Still today, as many as 2 million visitors walk reverently through the site each year.

### Other exploits

A visit to the Pointe du Hoc brought to mind a prophecy in the Bible about exploits—amazing feats of spiritual courage and action. An angel revealed to Daniel a prophecy that is no doubt both historical and yet for the end time (many prophecies in the Bible are fulfilled twice): “The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits” (11:32).

In the culminating battle between the forces of good and evil, God will strengthen and inspire His servants to accomplish great and memorable feats in His service. They will not flinch in the face of evil and will steadfastly advance the work of God.

Perhaps you and I shall have such a memorable privilege! Perhaps also, in preparation for greater things to come, there are lesser spiritual exploits we should practice now: to strengthen a weakness, to overcome a sin, to withstand a trial with perseverance, to perform good deeds in difficult circumstances, to learn to better know our God.

If we are to be ready to carry out great exploits in the future, we should be training for the mission now.

—Joel Meeker

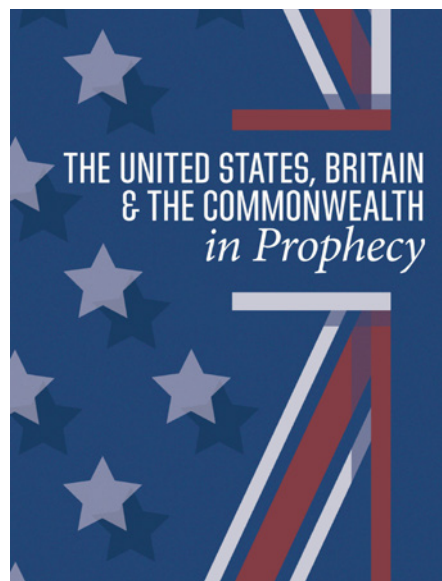
@JoelMeeker



# What's Next for the United States and Britain?

Many people are unaware that the Bible foretold the rich blessings that would come to the United States, Britain and the other Commonwealth nations. The story begins with the promises given to Abraham and can be traced throughout history, even to this day.

Download our free e-book!



What does prophecy reveal about the future of these nations, and how will it affect you? The Bible holds the answers. Download our free booklet from the **Learning Center on LifeHopeandTruth.com**