

What You Should Know About World Conditions:

In Luke 21:36 Jesus gave an ominous warning. After describing fearful events that would occur just prior to His second coming, He said: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." "Watch ye therefore" can have a double meaning. It can refer to paying careful attention to our spiritual standing before God, or it can mean we should be watching world events in order to understand the times. In Matthew 24, He described conditions that would prevail near the close of this age. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matt. 24:32-33). What are some of the conditions Jesus described? And what do other Scriptures reveal?

Increase in Sin and Ungodliness

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

Many professing Christians, perhaps even the majority, do not know the Bible definition for sin. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Murder and theft are included in this law-the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20: 13, 15). Murder and theft are two of our major problems. The present crime picture in the United States is not pleasant. The Apostle Paul described world conditions during "the last days," which do not exclude our nation.

While pornography, lewdness, immorality, and homosexuality are serious concerns for many, some authorities consider the number one pressing health problem to be violent crime. In a book entitled, *Guns, Crime, and Freedom*, 1994, pages 158-159, author Wayne LaPierre gives a number of facts. Without quoting the book directly, we find the following: While overall crime rates have been stable or declining in recent years, violent crime has increased in some groups-for example, teenagers and blacks. In the case of blacks it is the highest ever recorded. During the years of 1973-1991, 36.6 million people were injured as a result of violent crime, 6 million of them seriously. One in four households in the United States is victimized by one or more crimes each year, and in 1991 alone, it is estimated that \$19.1 billion was lost from personal and household crime. LaPierre points out that crime must be fundamentally treated as a moral issue. His appraisal is absolutely correct because crime violates the Law of God in a number of ways.

Jesus described the unlawful conditions that would prevail near the time of the end. He said: "And because [lawlessness] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12). The Bible defines love as the keeping of God's commandments. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). Crime is a moral issue, and a serious one at that. It is one of the signs of the time.

Can we expect the influential leaders of our society to come up with the answers and correct the problem?

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Not according to the prophet Jeremiah.

O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgment of their God. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. (Jer. 5:3-5)

An example of the kind of moral climate that exists today was disclosed in the Register Guard, April 28, 1984. A boy, age seven, admitted his role in the death of an eight-month old girl. Sexual battery charges were dropped against the boy in a return for a guilty plea of child abuse in the death of the infant. He and his older nine-year old brother sexually assaulted the girl with a hanger and a pencil imitating acts they saw in hard-core sex magazine. Their mother of the two boys was babysitting the child. She found it unconscious, and it died a few hours later.

Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, an expert on killing, teaches psychology and military science at Arkansas State University. His view is that American society conditions it young people to kill in the same way the military conditions soldiers. Grossman says that the rampant carcinogen is television. He regards the data linking TV violence and violent crime as more scientifically sound than the data linking tobacco and cancer. For example, pornography means nothing to young children who have no context for the images, but violent TV rivets their attention. He states: "TV violence rivets (kids') attention. It's electronic crack cocaine-it actually creates a hormonal and neurological response in the child's mind." The truth of the matter, according to Grossman, is that the average American child gets more one-on-one communication from TV than from all teachers and parents combined (Register Guard, May 26, 1998, A4).

The Register Guard, January 9, 1994, p. A3, informs us that at the very time the U.S. Centers for Disease Control has declared violence to be America's most pressing public health problem, modern scholars, ever willing to reject and mock God's Word (Jude 17-18), are seeking the solution to violence in genetics. They reject the Bible revelation concerning man's nature, and while greatly divided in their opinions, they are renewing the classic nature versus nurture debate. They are struggling to unravel "the great mystery"-what transforms innocent children into brutal teen-agers and adults? Are clues to be found in genes because some people are biologically or genetically predisposed to violence? The fact is: The cause of violence is no great mystery. Simply see what the Bible says about human nature (Mark 7:20-21, Gal. 5:19-21).

The Register Guard stated that the United States leads the industrialized world in murder, with an annual rate of homicide four times that of Scotland, with the next-highest rate. Murder is responsible for more deaths among young black men in America than any other cause, and Latino men are three times as likely to be killed as whites.

Edward M. Davis, former outspoken and controversial police chief of Los Angeles, laid much of the responsibility for juvenile crime on the women's liberation movement. He said women in the movement do not want to stay home and rear children properly. Since a child is formed in the first five years, whether he becomes a criminal sociopath is predicated before he goes to school. If the child is exposed to the view that it is all right to cheat and steal, then we can fully expect the future crime rate to shock us, Davis added (The Sacramento Union, August 7, 1975, A2).

The September 2, 2001, Parade Magazine carried an article entitled: "Why Are We So Angry?" The article states that we have all heard of "road rage." Now we have "sky rage," and "sideline rage." The American Automobile Association's Foundation of Traffic Safety dubs this violent aggressive driving "mad driver

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disease.” Airlines are reporting more outbursts of sky rage, and sideline rage has become widespread. For example, one Massachusetts father who was angered over rough play during his son’s hockey practice beat another father to death as the children watched. The author of this article, Dianne Hales, quotes Doris Wilde Helmering, a therapist and author of *Sense Ability*, who says “People no longer hold themselves accountable for their bad behavior. They blame anyone and everything for their anger.” Leslie Charles, the author of *Why Is Everyone So Cranky?* is also quoted as saying, “Never have people been so unhappy. There are more of us than ever, all wanting the same space, goods, services, or attention. Everyone thinks, ‘Me first. I don’t have time to be polite.’ We’ve lost not only our civility but all tolerance for inconvenience.” Brad Bushman, psychology professor at Iowa State University, is also quoted as saying that “Catharsis is worse than useless. Many people think of anger as the psychological equivalent of the steam pressure cooker. It has to be released, or it will explode. That’s not true. The people who react by hitting, kicking, screaming, and swearing just feel more angry.”

What we read above attests to the violence and mayhem that is regularly occurring in America, and to a lesser degree other nations. The world is not happy place. Surely our judicial system should be able to handle the problem of crime and violence, we say. Why can’t our leaders, scientists, and educators solve these problems? The answer: When men reject God, what is the result? “How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course” (Ps. 82:2-5). Like the heathen in Psalm 2:1, the people imagine a vain thing against God. They say: “. . . Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” (Ps.2: 3). In brief, men do not want God telling them right from wrong.

Take a look at our judicial system. We all know the scope of its failure, yet many lawyers and jurists insist it is working. But not all judges agree. *Parade Magazine*, July 28, 1996, page 4, carried a report by Judge Harold Rothwax of New York City. Judge Rothwax has presided over criminal cases for 25 years. He says that the procedural dotting of every “i” and crossing of every “t” has become more important than the crime’s substance. The bottom line is that the criminals are going free. There is no respect for the truth, and without truth, there can be no justice. Judge Rothwax believes the rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court over the past 35 years have made the criminal justice system incomprehensible and unworkable. He states that a criminal trial should be a search for truth. Instead our system is a maze constructed of elaborate and impenetrable barriers to the truth, and that without truth there can be no justice. Judge Rothwax regards the entire conduct of the Simpson trial as an unspeakable insult to the American people, one that left them feeling wounded and deeply distrustful of the system. He adds that it was an obscene circus and the American courtroom is dangerously out of order. No wonder the Moffatt Translation states: “. . . All men keen on crime shall be wiped out, men who gave false evidence, deceiving judges on the bench, defrauding good men with a quibble (Isa. 29:21).

Perhaps the cartoon of Moses, giving the Law of God to the Israelites on the Mount, fairly well depicts the view men have toward righteousness, holiness, and truth. As the crowd is listening, a voice rings out, “Could you make copies. We’d like to begin a loophole search.”

A Great False Religious System

One of the signs Jesus mentioned was false religion. He said: “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . . Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt.24:11, 23-24). The culmination of this false religion will be the establishment of a great false religious system. The Apostle Paul said that during the perilous times in which we live men would have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof” (2 Tim.

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3:5).

What religious form was Paul referring to? One thing is certain. Dramatic and lasting changes are taking place in what today is called Christianity. This is not to say many at the present time are irreligious. On the contrary, a Register Guard article, December 20, 2002, page A6, column 1, picked up from the Associated Press, points out that an international poll revealed that religion is much more important to Americans than to people in other wealthy countries. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents said that religion was “very important” in their lives. But interest in religion exceeds that of America in all ten African nations, six Latin countries, and six in Asia. Senegal is the most religious of all with a 97 percent rating.

Yet in spite of having an interest in religion, readers will recall the reaction from the media and established clergy when Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson had the unmitigated gall to say that the 9-11 terrorist attack in New York City occurred because an angry God allowed the terrorists to succeed. Their reason was because America had become a nation of abortion, homosexuality, secular schools and courts, and the American Civil Liberties Union. The outcry against these remarks was deafening. Liberal groups and commentators denounced them, as did President Bush. Walter Cronkite wrote that these clergymen were likened to the terrorists. As a whole, there was little support or defense made for these men by the Christian community. The fact is: Many who regard themselves as Christian like to feel religious but do not want to be religious. They would rather their views be kept private.

When we consider the changes now taking place in Christianity, here is what the Apostle Paul wrote: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times [certain] shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1). The Apostle John described the increasing “spirit of antichrist.” “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (1 John 2:18). What, then, can we expect ahead?

In spite of the interest in religion, George Cornell, reported in the Associated Press that secularism is deepening in America. He said that the thrust is to push religion out of the public discourse and American institutional life and to eliminate consideration of it as a significant aspect of reality. He said that the trend is a pagan society that is detached from any system of moral purpose and the adoption of the “scientific worldview.” This move has been so pervasive that the sidelining of religion has led some court decisions to hold that legislation based on “religious motivation is unconstitutional.” In effect, the article tells us that man has been made the center of the universe, and secularism is enshrined as protecting religion from the state (The Oregonian, April 1, 1978, page M3). It should come as no surprise that religion in any form is being excluded from government sponsored functions, so while people are interested in religion, Christianity is rapidly declining as a source of influence in the lives of millions.

Another Associated Press release candidly admits that the religious landscape in America is changing. A Harvard University professor of comparative religion gives some statistics. The Islamic Society of North America claims there are eight million Muslims in America. The heavy influx of non-Christian religions began with the Immigration Act of 1965, which eliminated national quotas. Since then Asians have increased from one million to seven and one third million. These “new Americans” have brought their “traditions” to the United States. What is taking place is a religious metamorphosis, and Americans do not realize their nation is evolving away from its Judeo-Christian roots. The article adds that as a nation, we have a rather low level of religious literacy (Register Guard, November 27, 1993, page 10).

Experts say big changes are in store for Christianity. The Cox News Service reports that about two billion people worship Christ, but Christianity is taking on new shapes and faces. For one thing we are coming to the age of the Latin Protestant church. Also, worldwide leadership of many traditional Christian groups is shifting from Western Europe and the United States to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Some Christians

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now borrow aspects from other faiths, such as Eastern meditation. More than eight in ten Americans feel the need to experience spiritual growth, but the Christianity they seek is often “free-floating and vague.” Furthermore, Christian groups are reaching across ancient chasms, as witnessed by ecumenism. In addition, there have been many more religious disputes taken to the courts (Register Guard, January 8, 2000, page C14).

The Atlantic Monthly carried a report on what was labeled “The Next Christianity.” In brief, the article corroborates what was stated in the above paragraph—that the religious focal point of Christianity will be located in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Worldwide, Christianity is shifting toward super-naturalism and neo-orthodoxy. Third world countries have a form of Christianity as distinct as Protestantism or Orthodoxy, which will likely become the dominant Christian faith. The fact is: Christians are facing a shrinking population in the liberal west and a growing majority in the traditional rest of the professing world. Right now half of all London churchgoers are black, and Liberia already has far more Anglicans than Britain. Southern Christianity—Africa, Latin America, and Asia—is more conservative than especially the American version, and the cultural gap between Northern and Southern Christians will increase rather than decrease. In the global South, Christianity is enjoying a radical revival, which is a return to its Scriptural roots. In moral issues, for example, the southern churches are far out of step with the northern churches, as they are far more conservative on issues such as homosexuality and abortion. These views can pose real political difficulties for a church that aspires to attain a global identity. In the Anglican Communion, orthodox Southern Christians regard the Euro-American world as coming close to open heresy—for example, such things as ordaining women and the approval by some churches of homosexuality. Some scholars have predicted the emergence of some secular movement or ideology that would command loyalty across nations like Christendom once did. We might even imagine a new wave of Christian states in which politics is inextricably bound up with religious beliefs (The Atlantic Monthly, October, 2002).

With these considerations in mind, we may give some thought to the view that a religious power will arise to command the respect of most of the world. The prophet Daniel provides an insight. Bible students know that many of his prophecies apply to the last days. Daniel tells us a man will arise that “. . . shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time” (Dan. 7:25). “Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered” (Dan. 8:11-12). Daniel was told that this prophecy was intended for the time of the end (v. 17). “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done” (Dan. 11:36). Compare verse 35 for the time setting.

A parallel is seen in the book of Revelation. Here we read: “And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet” (Rev. 16:13). Later events tell us “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Rev. 19:20). The power to arise, depicted as a beast, will perform miracles. “And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live” (Rev. 13:13-14). The Apostle Paul warned: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be

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revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3). How is the man of sin described? “Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie” (vv. 9-11).

By what is now taking place in Christendom, and considering what the Bible prophecies reveal, we can expect dark days ahead for those who really fear God and truly obey Him.

Persecution Against

Conservative Christians

Anyone versed in world news is aware of the growing hostility against religious conservatives in the Western world. Such issues as abortion and homosexuality have served as a catalyst to inflame various groups. They are the hot button issues. The September 11, 2001, attack on the trade towers temporarily shifted the attention away from these issues to the “war on terrorism.” Many Americans suddenly became conscious for the need to “get back to God.” However, most are unaware, or kept unaware, that the Christian Coalition of America has proposed a national day of rest-Sunday. Their view is that when national calamities come, people will demand Sunday legislation. Americans are urged not to go back to “business as usual.” Mike Brown of the National Church Liaison stated that we not only need a day of prayer and unity, but he also believe it is time to legislate a National Day of Rest. He views the observance of Sunday as essential to the welfare of this nation, and that this must be made a part of a legislated agenda in 2002 in order to increase trust in God to protect our Nation. Based on what is taking place in the courts, it is unlikely such a view will get very far.

Ann Coulter, well-known conservative author, commented on “the State’s Religion.” On UExpress Online, July 29, 2000, she wrote: “To the extent any Establishment Clause can be discerned from the Supreme Court’s rulings on the matter, the court’s position seems to be that invocations of the G-word can be permitted only around responsible adults who couldn’t possibly swallow that religious hocus-pocus.”

“Congress can begin sessions with prayer, Congress can have a paid man of the cloth on its payroll, and the nation’s coins may proclaim “In God We Trust.” Even the Supreme Court can still begin sessions with “God bless this court”-since that has clearly no effect, anyway. But all religious references must be kept away from impressionable children.”

As Ann Coulter relates, it now turns out that the Constitution requires that high school students be prohibited from mentioning God in speeches in football games. The court held that a wholly student-initiated speech at a football game constitutes an unconstitutional “establishment” of religion too. She points out that there was an imminent danger that the speech might spin out of control into a prayer. Now the court has decided that football games have to be G-word-free zones, and that as long as this court sits, prayer will never corrupt the ears of the cheerleaders.

The court, according to Ann Coulter, let stand a lower court ruling that struck down a public school policy requiring that students studying the theory of evolution be encouraged to “exercise critical thinking and gather all the information possible and closely examine each alternative toward forming an opinion.” What this ruling means is that one should not view the theory of evolution as something about which you can form your own opinion. In brief, you must believe the state’s religion.

Even “political correctness” has been infected by this pervasive antagonism against Christianity. Lou

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Dobbs recently reported a list of words and phrases now being banned in the classroom. For example, forget about mentioning “Adam and Eve.” It should be “Eve and Adam” to show that males do not take priority over females. Classic literature is also being rewritten, and words like “God” are not allowed (NewsMax.com, June 24, 2003).

Former police chief of Los Angeles, Edward Davis, had good reason to vent his frustration about childrearing on the Women’s Liberation Movement. NewMax.com, carried a report, dated June 16, 2003, by Patrick F. Fagan, Robert E. Rector, and Lauren R. Noyes of the Heritage Foundation. It was entitled “Why Congress Should Ignore Radical Feminist Opposition to Marriage.” The report stated that radical feminists who wish to undermine the “patriarchal family” have opposed President Bush’s proposal for a pilot program to promote healthy marriage. Originally the feminists were not opposed to marriage, but during the early 1970s radical feminism emerged and took the position that married women know that love is, at its best, an inadequate reward for her unnecessary and bizarre heritage of oppression. While the report did not mention this, the fact is that the entire feminist movement is hostile toward God and the marriage institution that was established at Creation. The feminist view is that the institution of marriage is the chief vehicle for the perpetuation of the oppression of women, and through the role of wife, subjugation of women is maintained.

The report states that Feminist Advocates regard marriage as a slavery-like practice, and this inequity cannot be destroyed until marriage is destroyed. An unremitting war against women is carried out by men in personal and public life, in kitchen, bedroom, and halls of parliament, according to these feminists. The report states that while these views are not widely shared within society, they do influence feminist groups which in turn influence Congress.

The report goes on to say that for decades feminists have attacked marriage as an institution that economically oppresses women, yet refuse to face the fact that women who give birth and raise children outside of marriage are seven times more likely to live in poverty than a women in a stable marriage. Over 80 percent of long-term poverty in the United States occurs in never-married or broken households.

The recent hiring of controversial National Organization for Women leader, Patricia Ireland, as CEO of the YWCA, outraged longtime supporters of the organization. The Traditional Values Coalition has begun to petition campaign to drive Ireland out. “She’s not young, she’s not a Christian,” said Andrea Lafferty of the Coalition. During her tenure in NOW, Ireland promoted a feminist agenda labeled as radical by conservatives. She promoted abortion rights, and is an admitted bisexual, as she has both a husband and a female lover (Fox News.com, June 26, 2003).

These feminist views are hostile toward God and His Word. Sadly, they reflect a contentious attitude against God’s Law. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7-8).

Some of the most invective criticism is hurled against Christians and others who oppose homosexuality. An article in the Register Guard entitled, “Bible passages shape homosexuality debate,” April 29, 2000, page C19, informs us that strong debate is occurring in some churches, and conflicting views are tearing them apart. The liberal bent is expressed by Phyllis Bird of the Methodists’ Garrett-Evangelical Seminary who says that the Levitical passages that proscribe homosexuality are Jewish exclusivity that don’t apply to modern America. She contends that the passages have no implication for lesbians. Also, she thinks the culturally bound thinking of ancient Jewish writers must give way to “the ongoing revelation of science.” Victor Furnish of Southern Methodist University believes that Paul’s condemnation of homosexuality simply followed Jewish practices at the time, and that he opposed only same-sex activity by those who were naturally heterosexual. Various other examples of human reason are expressed to void Bible passages, and liberal clergymen insist that the Bible advocates compassion, inclusiveness, and

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justice in a wider context. Paul Jersild of the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary thinks the church must accept new realities instead of being bound in the literal fashion of the text.

Not all clergymen agree. The Register Guard article calls our attention to Robert Gagnon of Presbyterians' Pittsburgh Theological Seminary who believes the acceptance of gay practice "would have an enormously detrimental effect because the Bible's stance is absolute, pervasive, and strongly held. At stake, he says, "is the credibility of the biblical witness on any moral issue."

Being anti-gay is neither popular nor politically correct. For example, the Pew Charitable Trusts has taken back a \$100,000 grant to the nation's third-largest Boy Scout council because of its refusal to let open gays be members or leaders. The Pew Foundation is not the first to stop funding the council over the issue. The William Penn Foundation stopped funding the council in 1966, and the Philadelphia Foundation followed suit two years ago. Both decisions were because of the exclusion of gays (Houston Chronicle.com, June 25, 2003).

A letter from Concerned Women of America, July 2, 2001, informs us that homosexual advocates are persuading lawmakers to legislate against "hate crime." You guessed it. Homophobia is now being classified as a hate crime. A bill sponsored by Senator Ted Kennedy, known as S. 625, the "Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act" includes "intimidation." This means that charges can be brought against Christians whose moral beliefs may "intimidate" a homosexual because it can create a hostile climate. What is now taking place is that America's laws are being altered to punish people for what they think, not just what they do. Any Christian can be punished who speaks the Bible truth that homosexual behavior destroys people. This has serious implications against any pastor who simply states what the Bible says about homosexuality. Christian schools could be shut down for refusing to hire "gay" teachers. S. 625 could destroy the freedom of speech by subjecting all opinions to government approval.

Now the Supreme Court (some say Supreme Wimps) has weighed in on the issue of homosexuality. In a 6 to 3 ruling, it recently rejected a Texas ban on homosexual acts. The majority ruled that the due-process clause of the Constitution gives homosexuals "the full right to engage in private conduct without government intervention. Men are entitled to respect for their private lives." The dissenting opinion, written by Justice Scalia, wrote that the court has largely signed in on the homosexual agenda (NewsMax.com Wires, June 26, 2003).

There is a reason the prophet Isaiah wrote to the people of Israel: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:10). "The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves" (Isa. 3:9).

Those who voice their opinions against the continuing moral decline in America can expect only trouble.

Here is what Jesus said:

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19). "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Matt. 24:9). "And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Luke 21:16-17).

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There is a time of great turmoil ahead for this world. The prophet Daniel foretold of terrible events to transpire before the return of Christ. He described this time as follows: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1). "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (Dan. 7:21).

A martyrdom of saints does lie ahead. "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (Rev. 6:9).

Based on the information above, as well as Scripture, it should not be difficult to see why there will be persecution against conservative Christians. When will it really become serious? Who knows? But we do need to recognize the various signs the Bible says will indicate the time is near. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matt. 24:32-33).

Incredible New Weapons

When Jesus said ". . . there should no flesh be saved. . ." He was speaking of the time of the end (Matt. 24:22). We are aware that the world has been under the threat of atomic and nuclear war since the end of World War II. There have been some close calls, and Jesus indicated this threat would continue. But advanced nations, aware of this danger, have taken steps to limit the scope and effects of war. Some have developed chemical and biological weapons, so-called "weapons of mass destruction," though certainly less dangerous than atomic or hydrogen bombs. Smart bombs and ingenious weapon systems have come on the scene, and while some collateral damage does occur, this destruction does not remotely compare to that unleashed upon civilian populations during World War II.

There are some strange descriptions given in the book of Revelation. They appear to illustrate systems of war that are presently foreign to us today. Some are couched in symbolism; others appear to be literal.

And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. "And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men . . . And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. (Rev. 9:3-7, 10)

Could this be referring to sophisticated nerve agents? Does this describe advanced helicopter systems? Only time will tell, but advances are constantly being made in weapons of war. Some bizarre things are taking place.

Here is an example. An article in the Register Guard by Jack Anderson, February 15, 1981, reported that the government is trying to develop weapons based on extrasensory perception. Representative Charles Rose, a member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, has advocated psychotronic weapons, and so far a trifling \$6 million has been spent on the project. The idea is to develop an anti-missile system that would throw a time warp over the North Pole. Incoming Soviet missiles would fly past the time warp

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and explode harmlessly in the past. The National Security Agency has tried to use EPS to crack Soviet codes, and NSA technicians have enlisted the help of local astrologists and palm readers. We are aware that a missile shield system is being developed by the United States as experiments take place with regularity.

Something not so bizarre was reported on NewsMax.com, December 10, 2000. An Australian inventor has developed a gun that can fire 180 rounds in one hundredth of a second, or one million rounds per minute. It is so fast that a bullet enters the barrel before the preceding one has left the muzzle. The gun has no moving parts and operates entirely on electronic impulses. The weapon would emit a "cloud of hot metal" instead of a stream of bullets. The weapon has awesome military implications. One American company has a ten million dollar contract to design a .50 caliber sniper's rifle that would fire three rounds before the rifle even recoiled, spoiling the sniper's aim.

While another weapon was not used in the recent war with Iraq, its implementation was discussed. An article on NewsMax.com, by Phil Brennen, February 17, 2003, entitled "Coming Soon to Bagdad-The Preview of the E-Bomb" gave a number of details. Brennen says its use would begin with a sharp crack like the sound of a lightning bolt striking an object. Bagdad and its environs would go dark, fluorescent lights and television sets would glow, and the smell of ozone mixed with the odor of smoldering plastic would permeate the surroundings as electric wires arc and telephone lines melt. Large voltages and currents would be generated in power lines, communication cables, radio towers, and other long conductors. Palm pilots would feel warm to the touch as their batteries became overloaded. Computers and all the data on them would vanish. Without missile capability, with tanks incapacitated, jet fighters down, and radar useless the Iraq military would not possess the modern instruments necessary for war. Brennen says that according to Associated Press Technology writer Jim Krane, the U.S. may fire a cruise missile tipped with a high-powered electromagnetic-pulse emitter, which fries electronics without killing the people-the so-called e-bomb. An e-bomb detonated over Bagdad could also disarm Saddam's chemical and biological weapons, as well as underground military sites.

Brennen points out that Dr. Lowell Wood of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory described the effects of EMP (electromagnetic pulse) to the House Committee on National Security on July 16, 1997. While testing hydrogen bombs in outer space, American scientists discovered that the electromagnetic energy created was similar to radio-made microwaves but with energy so great that magnetic memories were erased, and microscopic junctions in transistors melted on the earth below. These waves of energy are able to cripple sensitive microelectronics, but are too weak to be seen, heard, or felt by human beings. Since many systems are controlled by semiconductors, failure in the semi-conductor chips could destroy industrial processes, railway networks, power and phone systems, and access to water supplies.

But this science can be a double-edged sword if an enemy power develops it to use on the United States. Representative Curt Weldon said that if such a device were detonated over the United States, completely wiping out our smart capability, how could we respond knowing that no one was killed, nor any buildings destroyed?

The book of Revelation describes weapon systems that are yet to be developed. While we do not understand what and how these will come about, we should be aware of the eventuality and be alert to what is happening in world conditions.

Importance of the Middle East

The last area to be covered in this article is the importance of the Middle East in prophecy. We have been aware for a number of years of the turmoil and violence in the Middle East. Ample news sources, both in print and TV attest to this, so there is no need to repeat what is already well known.

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Jesus foretold the time when Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (Luke 21:20). He said this massing of armies would take place near His return (Compare Luke 21:7, Matt. 24:3).

The prophets give vivid descriptions of this event.

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east (Zech 14:1-4)

For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. (Joel 3:1-2)

Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:12-14)

The book of Revelation gives a parallel account.

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. (Rev. 16:13-14, 16)

Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. (Isa. 34:1-3)

Those who think a "loving God" could not do such a thing had better think again. God is a God of love, but He is also a God of justice.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Gal. 6:7)

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9-10)

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. (Eph. 5:6)

But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds. (Rom. 2:2-6)

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What is it that is going to precipitate the massing of armies in the Middle East? World opinion against Israel and the United States regarding Middle East policy is not improving. Some nations have urged the World Court to take action against the Israelis because of their reprisals against Arab militants. The situation in Palestine is untenable, seemingly incapable of being solved. Will it be an aroused Europe, along with others, who decide to intervene in the Middle East problem? To what degree will the United States become involved? Will a struggle take place for control of oil in the Arab nations? At the present these questions are unanswerable, but we can be certain that the prophecies that have been foretold will take place. How will we stand with God when it all takes place? Jesus said we should evaluate the news, as well as ourselves, if we desire to know the time and how we stand spiritually in God's eyes. For ". . . Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? . ." (Mal. 3:2).