

2009 In Review

The Year in Prophecy

By Ron Graff

Bible prophecy is a huge subject. In fact, nearly 1/3 of the entire Bible is devoted to prophecy. The Bible stands alone among sacred texts in this respect. The standard for biblical prophecy is 100% accuracy. In fact, an Old Testament test explained that if a prophet's word could not be trusted, he should be put to death (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

A large part of these prophecies have already been fulfilled, many of them in regard to the first coming of our Savior. This, of course, gives us great confidence that the rest of the prophecies will also come to pass literally.

Prophecies that are still to be fulfilled can be divided roughly into these categories: The Last Days, the Thousand-year reign of Christ, and A New Heaven and New Earth.

There is no doubt among Bible scholars who take the Bible literally that we are seeing many fulfillments of The Last Days. Using Jesus' own teaching about the future, these last days can also be divided into three segments: **The Beginning of Birth Pains** (Matthew 24:4-8), **The Tribulation** (Matthew 24:9-14), and the **Great Tribulation** (Matthew 24:15-28). In addition, Jesus gave some detail about what would transpire **After the Tribulation** (Matthew 24:29-31).

The events of this past year are truly amazing in the light of these prophecies. Unfortunately, the Church as a whole is not very alert to these developments. This too was foretold by The Lord Jesus

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.
- Matthew 24:12

He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. - Matthew 16:2-3

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. – 1 Timothy 4:1

Prophecy Central lists approximately 100 sub-topics of Bible Prophecy. From these we present what we consider to be the top 10 issues of 2009.

1 - Iran's Nuclear Developments

The most prominent prophetic issue during the year has been Iran's continued progress toward the development of nuclear arms and their hatred and opposition to Israel and the United States.

Just as Jesus predicted, there are many "wars and rumors of wars" (Matthew 24:6) in our generation. Near the end of 2009, GlobalSecurity.org listed 35 armed conflicts in the world, including 11 "major wars" (inflicting 1,000 or more battlefield deaths per year). Ironically, Iran, the greatest threat for war, is not listed because it is not directly involved in warfare at this time.

The War of Gog and Magog

Ezekiel the Prophet had a detailed vision of the rebirth of the nation of Israel (Chapters 36 & 37), which, of course, took place in 1948. He then saw aspects of a great war (Chapters 38 & 39) which has not yet been fulfilled. Many prophecy scholars call this "The War of Gog and Magog" and relate it to the Second Seal of Revelation 6:3-4. The Seven Seals are developments during the future seven-year "Tribulation" period. The First Seal is the introduction of a world leader (Antichrist). The second seal is a great war.

According to Ezekiel 38:1-2, the leader of this offensive is "Gog," the head of the land of "Magog."

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him." (NIV)

Magog has been identified since before the rise of the Soviet Union as the area of Russia and the countries nearby. Magog and his allies are nations that have developed from some of Noah's descendants in Genesis 10. They include other lands north of Israel, but also Persia, which is modern Iran; Cush, the ancient name for Ethiopia; and Put, which is Libya.

Iran's role in the next great war

Iran has been in the news almost constantly this year because of its radical president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who wants to eliminate Israel completely. Iran has dominated the Islamic world by military threat in the years since the Islamic Revolution of 1979. That event resulted in the ouster of their pro-Western leader, the Shah, and the establishment of Islamic law (Sharia) in that country. It also marks the beginning of the modern era of terrorism in the world.

Ahmadinejad has stated that he believes it is his role to help usher in the Shiite Messiah, the Mahdi, even though it might mean the destruction of his own country to bring that event to pass. This, of course, means that he, and others who think like he does, will not be restrained by the past safeguard of "mutually assured destruction" (MAD) which kept the U.S. and Russia from using their nuclear weapons against each other.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other experts say that Iran already has enough enriched Uranium to build one or more atomic bombs, and has probably perfected the trigger device for nuclear detonation. Recent successful tests of medium range Inter-continental ballistic missiles prove that they are capable of attacking Israel and even parts of Europe. The IAEA passed a resolution in November condemning Iran for developing a second uranium enrichment site in secret.

Russia will provide leadership

Russia has a special relationship with Iran, an alliance that goes back hundreds of years into the past. It has supplied the materials and know-how for the development of Iran's nuclear facilities, and provides many of the conventional weapons it has used to dominate the Muslim world.

Russia blocks any severe UN sanctions against Iran by supporting Iran's claims that their nuclear plants will only provide power, not weapons.

Vladimir Putin, a former KGB agent, and past president of Russia, has maintained virtual control of the country in his position as Prime Minister. Under his leadership Russia has taken steps back toward the Cold War position they abandoned in the early '90's. This year they announced plans to spend \$141 billion on new weapons over the next three years, including the production of 70 strategic nuclear missiles.

Israel in the crosshairs

The target of the War of Gog and Magog is little Israel, miraculously re-established as a nation in the last days (Read Ezekiel 36 and 37). Israel is portrayed as a nation at peace when this attack begins.

This Great War could be a nuclear attack, or it could be another supernatural event like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone.

The cause of this war could easily be the fact that Israel is simply not willing to allow Iran to have nuclear weapons. They have said so repeatedly. On the other hand, Iran's leaders have a deep hatred for Israel and the United States.

Both Israel and Iran conducted massive war games during the past two years and have talked openly about the possibility of armed conflict between their countries.

Israel has more than 100 jets and five submarines that could be used to cripple Iran's nuclear development sites. Israel's F-16I Sufa ("Storm") fighter planes are considered the most sophisticated fighter bombers in the world today. They are specially equipped with aerodynamically designed external fuel tanks for added range.

What President Obama is doing about Iran

Iran has ignored a deadline to ship its low-enriched uranium to Russia to ensure that it would not be further enriched to make weapons. Reacting to this news, President Obama

warned that the U.S. and its international partners would begin discussions about consequences of their actions. He said that we would soon develop a package of potential steps we could take that will indicate our seriousness to Iran.

Political analysts doubt that President Obama will support an Israeli strike against Iran, thinking that continued sanctions and negotiations will control their ambitions even if they do develop operational nuclear weapons.

Other Islamic countries are concerned

According to a senior Egyptian intelligence official, representatives of Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the U.S. held a meeting in December to discuss what Iran might do to retaliate if Israel should strike their nuclear sites. They believe that Iran would use proxies such as Hamas in the Gaza Strip to attack both Egypt and Israel, and Hezbollah in Lebanon to launch missiles at Israeli population centers. In Jordan, Iran could activate the Muslim Brotherhood to attack Jordanian interests.

Saudi Arabia was not involved in the talks, but it is known that they also fear Iran's military growth, and there were unconfirmed reports that the Saudis had given Israel permission to fly over their territory if necessary to attack Iranian nuclear facilities. In December Al Qaeda hideouts in Yemen were targeted by air strikes. It is common knowledge that Iran sponsors Al Qaeda terrorism against Saudi Arabia.

There is religious tension between the Shiite branch of Islamic teaching espoused by Iran and the Sunni branch adopted by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan.

The dramatic end of this great war of the 2nd Seal could produce the treaty predicted in Daniel 9:27, which many prophecy scholars identify as the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period

2 - The Ongoing Quest for Peace between Israel and the Palestinians

Year after year, the whole world hopes that peace will finally be established between Israel and the Palestinian people. Ever since Israel became a nation in 1948, there has been tension because the Palestinian people did not have a state of their own. (Actually, Jordan was meant to be a homeland for Palestinians, but it seems that few people remember this detail.)

The latest high-level progress toward peace was established by a summit meeting at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis in November of 2007. It used the "Roadmap" plan proposed by the so-called Quartet – the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia.

This year there has been lots of talk, but little progress in the peace process. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a hard-line conservative who has encouraged additional settlements by Jewish people in areas occupied primarily by Palestinians. The United

States government under President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has discouraged these settlements, but they have still been developed. President Obama reaffirmed Washington's "strong commitment to Israel's security," but he obviously has a broad agenda aimed at pacifying the Islamic world as well.

Palestinian leaders demand that all the land lost to Israel in the '67 war be returned in any peace settlement. In November they announced their intention to ask the United Nations to recognize a Palestinian state. This year they have also threatened to declare statehood unilaterally.

Earlier in the year, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu agreed that the creation of a limited Palestinian state could be considered, but it would have to be disarmed.

The most controversial aspect of the discussions is the proposal to divide Jerusalem and even the Temple Mount in order to give Palestinians the ability to establish their capital there. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu objected to the idea. At a Jerusalem Day ceremony in May he said, "Unified Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Jerusalem always has been and always will be ours and it will never be divided again."

Saudi Arabia and the European Union have both offered leadership in the hopes of resuming meaningful peace talks, but both tend to favor Palestinian positions, so they have not produced much progress.

A peace agreement might be just another phase in the age-old struggle between these nations, or it could be the false peace mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

3 - Major movements toward Global Governance

Financial Chaos

The economy has begun to recover from last year's financial storm, but there are still many problems, and some things about the world have changed forever. The United States is in a much weaker condition financially, and our current government evidently plans to lead us into a socialistic way of life.

When Nikita Khrushchev was the leader of the Soviet Union in the 50's and '60's, he predicted that various countries would fall into the lap of socialism like "ripe apples." It was implied that even the United States would someday succumb to this inevitable destiny. At the time it seemed absurd to nearly every American. But one of Newsweek's cover articles this year exclaimed, "We Are All Socialists Now."

It seemed that no one expected the great economic collapse last year. In a matter of weeks, untold millions of people all over the world lost a large percentage of their savings and investments. Where did that money go? At the beginning of the unexpected

crisis, major unknown investors harvested huge profits from the stock market. Was it a coincidence that so many of the super-rich decided to cash out at the same time? Now they have the funds that we lost! And when the time is right, they will buy back the properties and the stocks that have plummeted in value. The very rich will be richer still, and the majority of middle class people will be reduced to lower income status. Socialism is not a true “share the wealth” program. It has an extremely wealthy “elite” at the top that controls the government and the economy.

Whether or not America will resist this “fall” remains to be seen. But political analysts have warned that democracies are in danger once the majority of the people realize that they can use their vote to provide government benefits to themselves.

Europe has, for the most part, already adopted a form of socialism. Russia and China are socialist, and the global economic crisis is the perfect opportunity for greater government intervention to institute socialism everywhere.

The end result of this slide toward socialism could be the One-World economic system that is foretold by the Bible. It used to be hard to imagine what could bring the whole planet to the point that an economic dictator (Antichrist) could literally control all the buying and selling around the world. In Revelation 13:15-17 we read:

He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Now it doesn't take much imagination to understand how such a thing will happen.

Here is a brief review of some of the many news stories during the year that indicate that the financial crisis has pushed us into a one-world government state of mind.

In January, the venerable Henry Kissinger said that the global economic crisis has weakened the United States' position of leadership, but it also provides an opportunity for building new international relationships. He also warned that the alternative to a new international order is chaos.

Britain's Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, warned the nation not to retreat from globalism in the face of the crisis. He said, “We could view the threats and challenges we face today as the difficult birth-pangs of a new global order -- and our task now as nothing less than making the transition through a new internationalism to the benefits of an expanding global society.”

In April, speaking in Prague, Barack Obama said, "All nations must come together to build a stronger, global regime,"

In June Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told an international gathering in Moscow that a new world order is needed to deal with the many challenges arising in the international political arena. He said, "Western-style capitalism is falling apart, marking the end of the age of Imperialism."

In September, a new report published by The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development said that U.S. dollar should be replaced as the world's standard reserve currency. This world currency would be managed by an as-yet undetermined financial regulatory organization.

In October, The Independent, a British newspaper ran the headline, "The end of the dollar spells the rise of a new order. "Secret meetings" between finance ministers and central bank governors in Russia, China, Japan and Brazil have met to consider a scheme originated by Gulf Arab states to stop using dollars for oil trading. The proposed change will substitute a combination of currencies including the Japanese yen, Chinese yuan, the euro, gold and a new unified currency for key Arab Gulf states over the course of the next nine years

Terrorism

The continued threat of global terrorism is another impetus toward world government.

The "Surge", a military offensive in Iraq against Al Qaeda began in 2008, resulted in a much safer environment during this past year. But terrorism has spread to many places, and has taken various forms.

In Pakistan, a strong military offensive was waged by the government there against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, which have grown considerably, and were beginning to take control of parts of Pakistan. At one point there was some question about the outcome of the struggle. In June Abu al-Yazid, the top Al Qaeda leader in Afghanistan said that they would like to control Pakistan's nuclear weapons. He said, "God willing, the nuclear weapons will not fall into the hands of the Americans and the mujahideen would take them and use them against the Americans." Fortunately the Pakistanis succeeded in driving them out of the cities, back into the mountainous border between their country and Afghanistan. This is the area where it has been assumed that Osama bin Laden is living.

In May North Korea conducted a nuclear test and launched a number of missiles. Few commentators thought that North Korea would actually use one of their nuclear devices in war, but Graham Allison, director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University asked: "Could this guy believe he could sell a nuclear bomb to Osama bin Laden? ...Why not?" It would be easier, he said, than helping Syria construct a nuclear reactor, which the North Koreans are accused of having already done.

After months of debate about what to do in Afghanistan, where terrorists were gaining the upper hand again, President Obama announced plans to send 30,000 more troops to bolster military efforts there, but added that he plans to begin withdrawals by July 2011. The goal will be to train competent Afghan security forces to carry on the fight against the Taliban.

Liberal groups were unhappy to see any troop increase. Conservatives objected to a fixed timetable for withdrawal, thinking that this could signal to enemies simply to lie low and wait.

In November the U.S. suffered its second-worst terrorist attack in the middle of Fort Hood, a huge army base in Texas. Major Nidal Hasan killed 13 people and wounded many more. Hasan, an Army Psychologist, was born in America, but was a lifetime Muslim. He was a career soldier, but complained of being harassed for his Muslim beliefs after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. He was shot, but has recovered somewhat.

Further investigation showed that Hasan had terrorist connections and disturbing behavior, but such things were overlooked because of "political correctness." It turns out that he attended the Dar al Hijrah Islamic Center in Falls Church, Va. in 2001 while two of the 9/11 hijackers attended the same mosque.

At the time, the mosque's ultra-radical imam was Anwar Aulaqi, thought to have connections with Osama bin Laden. The imam also knew people involved in raising money for Hamas, a Palestinian group on the State Department's terrorist list, according to the FBI.

On Christmas a 23-year old Nigerian, Abdul Farouk Umar Abdulmutallab, attempted to blow up a Northwest Airlines jet over Detroit. He had concealed 80 grams of PETN, a compound related to nitro-glycerin used by the military, in his underwear. When he tried to detonate the explosive all that resulted was a fire. A brave passenger pulled him from his seat and put out the fire. He failed in his mission because the detonator may have been too small or was not in "proper contact" with the explosive material. Al Qaeda leaders in Yemen took credit for planning the attack. Subsequent analysis showed that there were multiple failures of the national security system to allow Abdulmutallab to even board the plane. The matter is being investigated and debated at this time.

Climate Change

In Copenhagen the United Nations held a highly publicized Climate Change Conference. The gathering makes another strong argument for the development of a One-World Government. In spite of the release of controversial e-mails from some climate scientists that global warming calculations are not accurate, thousands of enthusiastic delegates from all over the globe met to further their plans to limit carbon emissions and provide up to \$150 billion in aid to developing countries to gain their cooperation.

4 - Unification and Influence of the European Union

An example of the process of world government

The progress of the European Union is seen by many as an example of how global government can be constructed. This has been an important year for the EU because its member nations have finally ratified its constitution, The Lisbon Treaty, and have elected its first set of permanent officers. They will begin their work on Jan. 1, 2010.

Former Belgian Prime Minister Herman Van Rompuy takes office on January 1 as the first permanent president of the union. He hailed 2009 as “the first year of global governance.”

Lady Catherine Ashton, British Commissioner of Trade, was elected as EU High Representative. She will head up a new EU foreign ministry made up of 3,000 diplomats with 200 EU embassies and a big budget for peacekeeping missions.

The EU represents 500,000,000 people, a larger population and larger total economy than the U.S. A new study in September about the economic crisis showed that Europe is now the richest region in the world. North America's wealth plummeted by 21.8 percent, the steepest decline in the world. European assets only dropped 5.8 percent.

To prophecy students the formation of the EU has always been fascinating. Starting with Nebuchadnezzar's dream about an image that depicted coming world empires (Daniel 2), the final form of human world government will be an outgrowth of the Roman Empire. The gold head of the image was Babylon. The silver chest and arms stood for Medo-Persia. The brass waist and thighs represent Greece, and the iron legs symbolized Rome. The final form was the feet, half of iron from Roman days, and half clay. The ten toes of the feet corresponded to ten horns on the seven-headed beast in the book of Revelation (Daniel 2:41-43; Revelation 17:9-14). Will there be a final world empire that would start with ten nations in some sort of a union, and then grow to global influence?

In our generation we have seen such a union come into existence. The first step toward the formation of a European super state was the Benelux Agreement on June 8, 1948. This was a treaty between three very small countries, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Several years later, in 1957, in the city of Rome, and with a document called "The Treaty of Rome," those three countries joined with three other countries, Italy, France, and Germany to make the EEC (European Economic Community) which we call the Common Market. Today the organization is known as the EU (European Union). In 1973 the United Kingdom came in along with Ireland and Denmark, making a total of nine nations. In 1981 Greece became the tenth member of the union.

The EU now has 27 member nations and recently spawned a related organization known as The Union for the Mediterranean. This larger organization includes 43 nations from European, Middle Eastern and African nations all around the Mediterranean Sea. Libya's Muammar Gaddafi declined to join, calling it "another Roman empire."

At the heart of all of this, the original 10 nations have a separate powerful existence, The Western European Union. The WEU is relatively dormant at this time, but is bound together for mutual defense if it is ever needed.

Leadership in Middle East Peace process

In a December 4, 2009 article in the UK's Guardian newspaper, commentators William Nitze and Leon Hadar say that the European Union could bring peace to the Middle East. They believe that the EU must stop depending on US policy on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Their Union for the Mediterranean is already a step in the right direction, bringing together EU members with non-EU countries that border the Mediterranean, including Israel and the PA.

But the main European contribution to inducing the two sides to make peace – and to eventually sustain it – would be the offer of EU membership to Israel and Palestine.

They believe that joining the EU would help the Israelis and Palestinians economically. It would also provide laws, rules and norms of behavior that would help them succeed.

5 - Apostasy and Revival

Jesus warned that apostasy (“falling away”) of believers will occur in the last days.

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.

- Matthew. 24:12

Christianity declining

The secular media made its annual attack on Christianity during Easter week, led by Newsweek' Cover story: *The Decline and Fall of Christianity in America*. According to recent surveys, the number of Americans who claim no religious affiliation has nearly doubled since 1990, rising from 8 to 15 percent. The percentage of self-identified Christians has fallen 10 percentage points since 1990, from 86 to 76 percent.

The atheist or agnostic segment of society has increased about fourfold from 1990 to 2009, from 1 million to about 3.6 million. And fewer people now think of the United States as a "Christian nation" than did so when George W. Bush was president (62 percent in 2009 versus 69 percent in 2008).

American Christianity is not only declining numerically, it is declining in terms of the purity of its beliefs. In December, a new survey by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life shows that modern Christians pick and choose what they want to believe and where they want to worship at any given time. According to the survey, elements of Eastern faiths and New Age thinking have been widely adopted by 65% of U.S. adults, including many who call themselves Protestants and Catholics.

A year-end report by pollster George Barna agreed with these findings. According to Barna, Americans appear to be more interested in spirituality, but less committed to Christianity. He cited the book *unChristian*, by his colleague, David Kinnaman, who

says that being a Christian or associating with the Christian faith is not as attractive to Americans as it used to be because "the mass media have unfavorably caricatured the Christian faith," and "it is relatively rare to find someone who is an exemplar of the Christian faith." Another interesting finding by Barna is that 71% say they will develop their own slate of religious beliefs rather than accept a package of beliefs promoted by a church or denomination.

Homosexuality

Because the U.S. Episcopal Church has decided to ordain a homosexual bishop and bless same-sex unions, conservative Episcopalians have formed a separate branch of the church, which they have named the Anglican Church in North America.

The archbishop and primate for the new branch will be Robert Duncan of Pittsburgh. For the first time, a province would be defined not by geography, but by theological orientation. The North American church will have 100,000 members, compared with 2.3 million in the Episcopal Church.

In August, the general conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America voted to allow sexually active gays and lesbians in committed relationships to serve as clergy. The denomination has 4.7 million members and about 10,000 congregations.

By November, a large numbers of conservative Lutherans had left the ELCA over the issue of homosexuality and related matters of biblical authority. A "Coalition for Renewal" is in the process of establishing a new denomination which has not yet been named.

In California, the constitutionality of last year's Prop 8 – traditional marriage amendment, specifying that marriage is between a man and a woman, was challenged. The State Supreme Court upheld the validity of the amendment.

In two other states, Maine and Washington, voters also upheld traditional marriage, Gay marriage has now lost in every single state (31 in all) in which it has been put to a popular vote.

Abortion

President Obama had campaigned on the promise to sign FOCA , the Freedom of Choice Act, first thing during his presidency. Fortunately, he has been too busy with financial matters and other pressing issues, so the bill has not yet been passed. Meanwhile, anti-abortionists have gathered over 700,000 signatures against FOCA, and recent polls show that 51 percent of Americans now describe themselves as pro-life - up from the 44 percent who answered the same way in 2004.

Abortion has also figured prominently in the Congressional healthcare debates. Both houses have passed similar bills, but when Congress returns in January for final resolution, it is likely that abortion will be the hot issue. The House version eliminates coverage of abortions, but the Senate version includes a compromise whereby states

would be allowed to decide whether or not abortion could be covered by health plans operating in a new insurance marketplace under the bill. Plans covering abortion would have to collect a separate premium for the procedure, directly paid for by the person buying coverage. Abortion opponents in the House will probably not believe this compromise is good enough, so it could be a deal breaker in the final negotiations.

Disinterest in prophecy

One of the most amazing things about this period of time is the relative lack of interest in prophecy by many supposedly Bible-believing people. Perhaps it is partly because of the prophetic zeal of the Jesus People era that began in the late 1960's. It was a revival that emerged from the hippie counterculture and resulted in the founding of the Calvary Chapel movement and many other great churches. It was characterized by sound teaching about the Last Days and about the Rapture of the Church. Few Bible teachers made the mistake of setting dates for Christ's return, but the general feeling of the era was that it was very soon. The majority of those who were well taught in those days still believe, but the excitement has diminished with time, and with the fact that The Lord has not yet returned.

The Apostle Paul taught us not to be discouraged by the timing of Christ's return:

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." - 2 Peter 3:3-4 (NIV)

Another disturbing factor that results in a lack of interest in prophecy is the subtle teaching of some mega church pastors that prophecy is not important. To some of them, belief in the soon coming of Christ is counterproductive to their long-rang plans to change the world in the name of Christ.

End-times revival

In spite of all these signs of apostasy, there are also signs of revival. God has always offered salvation to those who will believe before He brings judgment. Think of the Flood of Noah's days, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Nineveh. As the darkness gets deeper the light shines brighter. Spiritual warfare will intensify as Bible-believing Christians stand firm and "nominal" Christian numbers grow.

This polarization leads to two major end-times events. The first of these is the Rapture of the Church – when Jesus Christ returns to take away true believers before the judgments of the Tribulation period (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The second prophetic activity takes place during the Tribulation. It is the formation of a one-world religion, led in part by apostate Christians who have forsaken the Bible. This great movement is characterized by the prostitute of Revelation 17 who will give her power to the beast, Antichrist, and his dictatorial one-world government.

In the broad world of missions, the Gospel is constantly gaining ground. And even in America there is a strong faithful remnant and some exciting signs of revival!

On the World Missions scene Christianity is growing rapidly. There is a concerted focus on reaching Asia in this generation, and Christian faith is still growing in spite of Islamic persecution in Africa.

There is secret growth of Christianity in the Islamic world. In many cases, Jesus appears to Muslims who could not hear the Gospel from a missionary.

Korean Christianity continues to maintain great enthusiasm. Five of the world's ten biggest mega churches are in South Korea.

In Communist China, the underground church has grown from 3 million when the missionaries were expelled, to more than 100 million today! These devout Christians attend house churches and live under the constant threat of imprisonment and even martyrdom. These same fearless believers have spawned the "Back to Jerusalem" Movement which plans to take the Gospel to Asian nations in a wide sweep that will eventually end at Jerusalem in the Holy Land.

Here in the United States, there are also seeds of revival. The polls cited above indicate that even though formal, liturgical Christianity is in decline, charismatic Christianity and many evangelical churches are growing.

There are persistent reports of revival in Kansas, especially in connection with the International Houses of Prayer (IHOP) movement. Also in St. Louis during the last week of the year, the great Urbana Missions Conference, which meets only once every three years, is planning the future course of world missions. More than 16,000 students from the U.S. and Canada have gathered for the occasion.

There is even some impetus toward revival from the political scene. Former Vice-presidential candidate, and likely future Presidential hopeful, Sara Palin, on a video from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, said that the United States should rededicate itself to seeking God's will. She said:

"It takes a united nation, and it does take godly counsel, and it takes prayer and answers to prayer — and a collective humble heart of a nation seeking God's hand of protection and his blessings of prosperity."

Another high-profile political figure, Newt Gingrich, released his new book, "Rediscovering God in America – Reflections on the Role of Faith in Our Nation's History and Future."

In summary, we can expect a continued polarization of the nation – further descent in to ungodly behavior and apostate forms of Christianity – accompanied by exuberant waves of revival and evangelism by the faithful Christ-followers of these Last Days.

6 - Growing pressure to treat all religions as equal and mixing of elements of various religions.

Christians have always known that the Bible predicts that one day there will be a one-world government and a one-world religion, but it was hard to visualize how these things could happen. It was thought that Americans, at least, would reject the idea of any kind of super-governmental power or super-religion.

The Parliament for the World's Religions came into existence in 1893. It was followed by other organizations that have tried to distill the essence of religions so that everyone could have some point of agreement. The latest effort toward this goal was a meeting in Melbourne of The Parliament of the World's Religions. Thousands of representatives from 80 nationalities and more than 220 faith traditions spent a week of dialogue about how to increase understanding and cooperation between various religious traditions. They discussed such topics as climate change and the west's relationship with Islam.

It is worth mentioning that the movie "Avatar" broke all previous box-office records. It was rated PG-13, but intentionally targeted the younger children through McDonald's happy meal program. It was a fascinating production with an interesting story line. However, the underlying message of the movie was about pantheism (all living things are part of God) and New Age religion. It will undoubtedly have a great influence on the cultural drift already mentioned above (under Apostasy) toward mixing and unifying religions.

This would be a good time for every Christian to review Revelation, chapters 17 and 18. In the last days there will be a final evil world empire, represented by the beast, and a false world religion, represented by the woman who rides the beast. This will not happen until after the Rapture of the Church, but, in the light of current events, it makes good sense.

7 - Possibility of an Anti-Christ World Leader

The growing acceptance of a one-world government model presupposes an extremely powerful leader at the head of such an organization.

There is no apparent financial messiah on the world's radar, but, as we said in our report last year, our view has not changed that President Obama is not a likely candidate for the role of Antichrist. Nevertheless, his surprising rise to power and his popularity around the world shows how a person can rise quickly from relative anonymity to a place of great prominence and leadership.

Antichrist will not be revealed until the Holy Spirit, the One who holds back sin, has been taken away, presumably by the Rapture. People may have suspicions about one person or another, but they can not know for sure who he will be until that time. The Apostle Paul wrote:

3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

5 Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? 6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8

8 – Progress Toward an Economic Dictatorship

The world-wide financial crisis of the past two years would be sufficient cause for the world to enlist the services of a great financial genius who would be able to restore confidence in world markets and international cooperation.

According to the Book of Revelation, at the middle of the 7-year Tribulation period, an economic dictator will impose "The Mark of the Beast." Without it no one will be permitted to buy or sell.

He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, 17 so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

18 This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

- Rev 13:16-18

At Prophecy Central we track the major technological developments that will make such a world-wide financial system possible. A few decades ago it was a great mystery how this financial control could be imposed. The gradual development of personal computers, the Internet, Satellites, and supercomputers, along with sophisticated credit and debit cards, smart cards, and implantable radio-frequency identification devices has taken away the mystery and made the concept understandable to all of us.

Now the incredible and fast-growing power of web books, cell phones and GPS devices bring us a bewildering choice of portable computers, iPhones, Blackberries, Droids, etc – all at a fraction of the price we could have ever imagined such devices would cost. With tens of thousands of applications available, people can practically run their businesses from their hand-held phones. And with the spread of wireless and satellite coverage, the whole world can participate in Antichrist's economic experiment.

In October, Uruguay reached its goal of providing a laptop for every child attending state-run primary school. It is the first country to do such a thing, handing out computers to 362,000 pupils and 18,000 teachers. The country plans to expand this service to secondary and pre-K schools next year.

IBM is working on its new Sequoia computer, to be delivered in 2011 to the Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. It will operate at 20 petaflops (20 quadrillion floating point operations per second!). At that speed, one computer could devote nearly 3 million calculations to each person's credit, bank account balance, physical location, and other matters. In fact, it could do all that for each of the nearly 7 billion people of the world in one second before starting the whole process all over again! Of course, Antichrist's system will not depend on just one computer, but will use thousands of them working in parallel, just as Google does already.

9 - Persecution

World Persecution

Open Doors, a ministry led by Brother Andrew, is dedicated to serving persecuted Christians worldwide. They say that 100 million Christians around the globe are currently suffering persecution for their faith. This persecution takes many forms: imprisonment, abuse, hostilities, and even death. Jesus foretold this persecution.

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. - Matthew 24:9

“Toleration” and hate crime legislation

Our generation has been raised on post-modern views of relativism. Rejecting the notion of any absolute truth, they seek to define their own reality and be tolerant of what other people consider to be their truth. From this philosophical framework they do not see abortion and homosexuality as intrinsically evil.

Worse yet, Christians who do have strong biblical convictions against abortion and homosexuality are increasingly seen as “haters.” As such, they will be the target of the new “Hate Crimes Prevention Act” that President Obama signed into law on October 28. Technically, freedom of speech is still allowed, but if one of his listeners commits a hate crime, the speaker could be considered a co-conspirator in the crime.

Disdain for Bible-believers

In April a new Homeland Security document puts authorities on the look-out for trouble from unnamed "right-wing extremists." While admitting that their activities "have been largely rhetorical and have not indicated plans to carry out violent acts," the report says that those concerned about illegal immigration, increasing federal power, restrictions on firearms, abortion and the loss of U.S. sovereignty may become violent in the future.

The most striking aspect of this report is their description of "right-wing extremists." The list includes individuals who are dedicated to a single issue, such as opposition to

abortion or immigration, and teachers of "end times" prophecies that could motivate extremist individuals and groups to stockpile food, ammunition and weapons.

Later in the year a United States Army report was revealed, called "Strategic Implications of American Millennialism." It is about the literal believers of the Bible and how they affect American foreign policy. This report blames all the world evils on believers! World peace would break out if it were not for Bible believers in America. The trouble with Israel is because pre-Millennial believers support Israel.

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil. - Isaiah 5:20

10 - Preparation for the Third Temple

This last issue doesn't garner many headlines, but it is a very important sign that the last days are near. There is, of course, no Temple in Jerusalem now. The Temple rebuilt by Herod the Great in Jesus' time was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans. The retaining wall of the old Temple Mount area is called the Western Wall or the "Wailing Wall" by the Jews. Two buildings were erected on the Temple Mount by the Muslims during the time of their occupation. One is the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the other is The Dome of the Rock, built over the high point of the mount, where the Jewish Altar of Sacrifice once was.

The Jewish people long to have their Temple rebuilt since they have not been able to offer sacrifices during all this time. But building the Temple now would cause an international war between Jews and Muslims. This is one of the most difficult discussion points for any peace process that might be adopted by Jews and Palestinians in the area.

The Bible indicates that a Temple will exist in the Last Days (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 13:11-18). In this Temple, Antichrist will erect a statue of himself to be worshipped. Jesus said,

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel-let the reader understand-then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." - Matthew 24:15-16

This means that by the middle of the Tribulation period a new Temple must be built. Using older methods, this would take many years, like it did in King Herod's days. But with modern equipment, it could be erected quickly if the plans and materials were ready to begin the process.

The Temple Institute

During the past several years, quietly, and behind the scenes, preparations have been made for just such an opportunity. An organization known as The Temple Institute has already spent approximately 27 million dollars on preparations for the rebuilding of the Temple. Their Museum in Jerusalem's Old City contains solid gold service vessels, trumpets made of silver, garments to be worn by future priests made from golden thread, copper urns and many, many other items that have been painstakingly designed to Biblical specifications for use in the future Temple. They have even started the building

of the massive sacrificial altar. It obviously can not be built where it belongs, but it is being erected off site, and will be transported to the new Temple when it is ready. The rocks for the sacrificial altar were gathered from the area around the Dead Sea and they were individually wrapped in order to ensure that they are not touched by metal as the Torah requires.

Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement

Gershon Salomon and the Land of Israel Faithful Movement are calling on religious and political leaders in Israel to end the prayers of the Israeli people at the Western Wall and allow them to rebuild their Temple. They have produced architectural plans for the Third Temple and two cornerstones for starting the work of rebuilding.

Visit Prophecy Central

Be sure to visit Prophecy Central often to get updates on all of these issues and many others. There is literally news of interest to prophecy students every single day! And be sure to test every development against the Bible itself as we wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Scripture references are from the New International Bible (NIV).

Documentation, Scriptural references and illustrations may be found in the various sections of Prophecy Central, "A World of Information About Bible Prophecy."

<http://www.Bible-prophecy.com>

An HTML version of this report with hypertext links to documentation is available at

<http://www.Bible-prophecy.com/2009/review2009-1.htm>

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