

2010 In Review

The Year in Prophecy

By Ron Graff

There is no doubt among Bible scholars who take the Bible literally that we are seeing many fulfillments of End Times prophecy. Using Jesus' own teaching about this future period of time, it 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).

2010 has been another big year for Bible prophecy students. We have identified 10 Top categories of interest in this subject, and have grouped them under four major divisions: World at War, Globalization, Apostasy and Revival, and Miscellaneous Developments.

WORLD AT WAR

Again this year, this issue tops the list of significant world developments in the light of Bible prophecy. Jesus said,

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains. – Matthew 24:6-7

GlobalSecurity.org listed 37 armed conflicts in the world at the end of the year. Again, Iran has technically escaped this list because it is not directly involved in warfare. The United States has continued involvement in four wars.

One war that was never settled since its inception in 1953 is the Korean conflict. North Korea has developed nuclear warfare capabilities and has apparently helped Iran and Syria in their nuclear ambitions. In March satellite images revealed that the North Korean's were helping Iran build a rocket launch site to send Iran's new Simorgh missile into space. And that rocket could be transformed into an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.

Recently North Korea has have engaged in provocative rhetoric and actions against South Korea . In November they shelled an island near the border between the two countries, killing four people. South Korea then conducted the largest military exercise in its history near the border, which, in turn, prompted North Korea's armed forces minister to declare that their country is ready for a "sacred war of justice" using a nuclear deterrent.

China has become a major factor on the world economic scene, and is in the process of greatly improving its military might as well. In November a mysterious contrail in the Pacific Ocean 30 miles off the coast of Southern California was never identified, but after examining the television videos of the event, two military experts said they believe it was the launching of a missile, probably from a submerged Chinese nuclear submarine close

to America's coastline. If so, it is thought that China was trying to send a message to Washington. At that time President Obama was abroad trying to lessen concern by China about our country's out-of-control deficit in spending.

In December Adm. Robert Willard, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, said that he believes China has achieved "initial operational capability" for its Dong Feng 21D "carrier killer" missile. The device was designed to sink an aircraft carrier. It might still take a decade to fully implement all the systems that are involved, but once it finished it could be a game-changer in the Asian security environment where U.S. Navy aircraft carriers have ruled the waves there since the end of World War II.

Under the general heading of war, we now consider three special aspects of this problem in the light of Bible prophecy.

1 - Iran's Nuclear Development

Ever since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 Shiite Muslim leaders in Iran have taken the lead in spreading Islamic law (Sharia) and encouraging the activities of terrorists against Israel, especially through Hezbollah in Lebanon. Their president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has repeatedly called for the destruction of Israel. The country has been censured repeatedly by the United Nations and various countries for their apparent plans to produce nuclear weapons.

They claim that their nuclear program, which has been in progress for many years, is only meant to produce nuclear power. However, the evidence is clear that they are planning to produce weapons of mass destruction. And unlike other nuclear powers so far, Iran might well use such weapons to destroy Israel even though it would result in their own destruction. Ahmadinejad has stated that he believes it is his role to help usher in the Shiite Messiah, "The Twelfth Imam," Muhammad al-Mahdi. Their prophecies indicate that this person, who was supposedly hidden by Allah, will return to save the world when it is in a state of chaos.

Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, the hard-line spiritual mentor of Iran's president, wrote a book calling for the production of the "special weapons" that are a monopoly of a few nations. This is apparently a veiled reference to nuclear arms.

In September a report to the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency stated that Iran already had enough enriched uranium to make three nuclear devices, but it would need to speed up enrichment from 20 percent to 90 percent.

Russian Leadership

Russia has been Iran's primary source of expertise to build their nuclear reactor. Construction on Iran's first nuclear reactor at Bushehr was begun in 1975. In August the Russians began to install nuclear fuel in the facility. Iran claimed this as a great victory, but a mysterious computer virus called "Stuxnet," appeared that evidently targeted only Iranian nuclear facilities, and caused malfunction of some of their equipment, delaying the actual start of the power generating station.

Meanwhile, US relations with Russia have become less friendly. In June the FBI uncovered a Russian spy ring and arrested 11 suspects.. They said that the accused spies were able to get close to a scientist working with "bunker-buster" nuclear bombs and a New York financier with powerful political ties.

In December, the US Senate ratified the START treaty that limits nuclear devices. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said he was pleased with the development but he added that Russian legislators will now study the Senate resolution before they would also ratify the treaty. The New START treaty, signed by Obama and Medvedev in April, would limit each country's strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550, down from the current ceiling of 2,200. US analysts complain that the treaty does not include adequate inspection provisions to insure Russian compliance.

The War of Gog and Magog

Russia's support of Iran, the declared enemy of Israel, and the strained relations between Russia and the US remind prophecy students again of Ezekiel's prediction about the rebirth of the nation of Israel (Chapters 36 & 37), which, of course, took place in 1948, and of a great war against Israel (Chapters 38 & 39) that 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 (The Beast). 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."

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.

Early in the year Russia announced that Libya will be the first country in the Middle East to obtain top-of-the-line S-300 PMU-2 interceptor missile batteries from Russia.

Some of the Islamic countries near Russia, which used to be part of the Soviet Union, could be allies in this coalition. Turkey, the center of the last Islamic caliphate -- disbanded by World War I, has drifted this year from attempts to become part of the EU, to open enmity with Israel. Following an Israeli capture of a ship carrying aid for Palestinians, Turkey's very popular Prime Minister Erdogan, called for a jihad against Israel.

2-Rumors of War

"Rumors of war" are threats of war. It is not enough to have so many dreadful physical battles, but we must also endure several kinds of threats – some based on isolated attacks,

such as acts of terrorism or cyber-attacks, and others based on what could happen, like nuclear war. Actually, the whole first section of our report was more about these threats than they were about conventional warfare. We will now look at some of these “rumors of war” briefly

Terrorism

Terrorism is a major fact of life in our time, but there is no universally accepted definition of the term. A simple description is “violence and attempted violence intended to produce a state of terror in the general public.” They are generally not approved by any government, although the US State Department did release a list this year of state sponsors of groups designated as terrorist. The list names four offending countries: Iran, Sudan, Cuba, and Syria. Other breeding-grounds of terrorism are the Gaza Strip, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia.

Even in the US there appears to be a rising number of “home-grown” terrorists. It is truly an international problem, affecting most countries of the world. According to some sources there have been more than ten thousand terrorist attacks since the 9/11 carnage. A large percentage of them claim that they are caused by the tension between Israel and the Palestinians.

Some experts are pessimistic about ever destroying this evil since it is so widespread, and is growing by use of the Internet to communicate, educate, and train terrorists.

An article in an Al Qaeda-affiliated magazine in November boasted that the recent shipping of two bombs in UPS packages was not expected to cause great damage, but to force the U.S. government to spend billions of dollars on preventive security screening measures.

Cyber War

According to the Jerusalem Post, the Stuxnet virus was the biggest Middle East story of the year. The ultra-sophisticated computer program spread like other viruses, but was designed to target Iranian nuclear facilities. Some experts say that it set Iran's nuclear weapons program back by two years. The Dec. 30 article (“Top Middle East Story of 2010: The Stuxnet virus”) states that this event is, “likely just the beginning when it comes to the use of cyberwarfare in global efforts to stop Iran. Some have compared it to the entrance of the airplane or tank into the modern battlefield.” It is assumed that Israel was behind the development of this virus, but there is no confirmation of its origin.

A visit to Prophecy Central’s “Cyberwar” page shows that other countries, including China and North Korea have been suspected of launching so-called “malware” against other countries and of stealing state secrets via the Internet. Some experts have even warned that future terrorist computer intrusions could cause a series of events that would lead to the launching of a nuclear attack

WikiLeaks

Another Internet threat is the new phenomenon of websites releasing to the public massive amounts of classified information. One high-profile example of this is Julian Assange's "Wikileaks" website. The information is potentially very damaging. The US government says that the leaks had endangered the lives of several people working for the US in secret, and could ruin international relations between various countries. While the persons responsible for turning over the information may be guilty of treason, authorities are not sure that they have legal grounds to eliminate the website. This developing story will undoubtedly become even more serious as time goes on.

Electro-Magnetic Pulse Attack

Government officials are increasingly concerned about the possibility of the use of a nuclear device at high altitude over the United States. Such an attack would not require multiple warheads or pin-point accuracy to cause immeasurable damage to our country's infrastructure. Therefore, a rogue state with simple nuclear capability could destroy computers all over the nation, leading to a loss of electrical power and other necessary utilities.

WorldNetDaily quoted Frank Gaffney, president of the Center for Security Policy, who warned, "Within a year of that attack, nine out of 10 Americans would be dead, because we can't support a population of the present size in urban centers and the like without electricity."

3 – The Peace Process

Much attention was given to a long-awaited peace between Israel and the Palestinians in 2010. The year started with plans for meetings between leaders of the two people, brokered by the US. On the first day of the year, following a visit to Cairo, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu suggested that he and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas could meet later that month to rejuvenate the peace process in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh.

Before the meeting could take place, US Middle East Envoy George Mitchell met with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and President Shimon Peres. Their discussions were hampered a new demand from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for an Israeli military presence in the West Bank to stop weapons smuggling, even after formation of a Palestinian state.

A Time Magazine article said that the US may have overestimated its ability to persuade Israel and the Palestinians to cooperate.

In May, Mitchell launched Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. He met first with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and then with Palestinian Authority President Abbas in Ramallah. Abbas allocated four months for the indirect talks, insisting that the main disagreements must be discussed — control of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, borders and Israel's West Bank settlements.

For his part, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu repeated his position that direct talks should begin without preconditions. He rejected a Palestinian demand that direct negotiations be based on the 1967 borders. Throughout the year the issue of Israeli settlements in West Bank areas was an ongoing point of disagreement. The Palestinians want all of the land they lost in the 1967 war, but Israel feels that those exact boundaries would leave them vulnerable to future attacks. For that reason they have established numerous Jewish settlements, presumably with the idea in mind that when a peace proposal is accepted, some settlements would be kept for security reasons and others could be traded with the Palestinians for certain areas necessary to Israel's defense.

As the year wore on a flurry of attempts were made to stimulate the peace process. In September, President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton attempted to re-launch direct negotiations between leaders of the two groups.

The President asked the United Nations General Assembly to support an Israeli-Palestinian agreement that would lead to the creation of an independent Palestine and a secure Israel in a year's time. He said,

"If an agreement is not reached, Palestinians will never know the pride and dignity that comes with their own state. Israelis will never know the certainty and security that comes with sovereign and stable neighbors who are committed to coexistence."

In October, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak weighed-in dramatically on the issue, telling several leaders, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, that "if the peace process collapses, violence and terrorism will erupt in the Middle East and all over the world."

At the end of the year negotiators said that they will continue to find new ways to keep the peace process alive.

GLOBALIZATION

Throughout Old Testament prophecies, there is a theme that Israel will have conflict with her neighbors, but then be restored to a place of blessing in their own land. In the book of Daniel there are several dreams and visions that foretold a succession of world governments from the time of Babylon until the end of the age. Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which God allowed Daniel to interpret, gave the outline of this progression. In Daniel 2:26-45 the dream is explained. After Babylon there will be four other human empires, and finally one heavenly kingdom will be established. The gold head of the image was Babylon. History shows that the silver chest and arms stood for Medo-Persia. The brass waist and thighs represented Greece, and the iron legs symbolized Rome. The fourth empire, which still has not had historical fulfillment, will be an outgrowth of the old Roman Empire. It will start with ten nations in some sort of a union, and then grow to global influence. It, in turn will be overthrown by Messiah's return to Earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:11-16).

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 was called 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.

While it once seemed highly unlikely that another global empire would ever be established, our generation is witnessing forces that could very well result in an end times global government. We will now consider some of these forces that captured headlines in 2010.

4 – Natural Disasters

Experts say that the year 2010 brought the greatest mix of natural disasters in more than a generation. Earthquakes, heat waves, floods, volcanoes, super typhoons, blizzards, landslides and droughts killed more than a quarter million people this year, compared with just 15,000 in 2009.

Some of the biggest events were the Haitian earthquake, the Russian heat wave and Pakistani flooding.

Some analysts say that the death toll from disasters is increasing because of unwise decisions about where to build cities and poor construction practices. Others claim it is a result of global warming because of many heat records set during the year, but that is confusing in light of the severe blizzards at the beginning and end of the year.

World-wide natural disasters are an impetus to global governance because of the need for humanitarian aid after these events. It is too great a task for a few nations to try to meet all of these needs. This concern leads to international gatherings sponsored by the United Nations to work together on relief efforts, fighting diseases and studying ecological questions such as global warming.

Bible Students realize that natural disasters are sometimes judgments from God, especially when they come during or immediately after an event of prophetic importance. However, it is unwise to be dogmatic about the exact meaning of disasters, since there are both natural and supernatural causes of such catastrophes. At the least, these tragedies should cause us to return to our once-strong Christian faith as a nation. And on a personal level, they should cause non-believers to consider giving their lives to Christ.

5 – Economic Problems

The economic chaos in the world and in the United States improved somewhat last year, but our slide toward socialism continued with the adoption of the so-called "Obama Health Plan." Almost immediately there was a huge negative reaction to this legislation.

Even before that, in the previous year, one of Newsweek's cover articles announced, "We Are All Socialists Now." 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. The very rich capitalized on the economic melt-down, widening the gap between the rich and poor, and reducing the number of middle class families in the U.S.

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 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.

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

In March, following the approval of the health plan, a new Fox News poll reported that 79 percent of voters think it is possible the American economy could collapse, including large majorities of Democrats (72 percent), Republicans (84 percent) and Independents (80 percent).

Moreover, 78 percent of voters believe the federal government is "larger and more costly" than it has ever been before, and by nearly three-to-one, more voters think the national debt (65 percent) is a greater potential threat to the country's future than terrorism (23 percent).

A report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in April discussed how this organization sees the International Monetary System evolving after the financial crisis. It will take time to implement, but basically they think that the best way to ensure stability after the crisis would be to launch a global currency.

In July Chuck Colson sounded the alarm that the massive US debt held largely by the Chinese, could lead to an overnight collapse of our economy and a dictatorial take-over of our government!

A Breitbart article in September picked up the same theme. University professor Laurence Kotlikoff, imagined a doomsday scenario about an economic clash between superpowers the United States and China, which holds more than 843 billion dollars of US Treasury bonds. "A minor trade dispute between the United States and China could make some people think that other people are going to sell," he wrote in the IMF's Finance & Development review. This could result in a massive sell-off of US treasury

bonds, which would then force the government to print more money to pay for them, leading to hyper-inflation.

Der Spiegel then printed a major article, *Money Is Power: An Inside View of the IMF's Massive Global Influence* in which it called the emerging G20, "that coalition of the strongest economies, the center of power in a new world." And it called the IMF, "The New World Order." The article explained that Europe, the United States and the United Nations have all become too slow and fragmented to compete with "dashing powers like India and China." (This is interesting, since the IMF, headquartered in Washington D.C., is an arm of the UN.)

One encouraging sign was the November elections. They were a referendum on the careless spending and socialistic trends that had characterized the previous two years.

6 – Political Developments

Three major trends of 2010 bear watching as we go forward into this new year.

Progress toward a global government – This was mentioned above, noting the continued strengthening of structures such as the European Union. In the previous paragraphs we have also shown how natural disasters and economic problems are pushing the world toward the establishment of international organizations that can deal with such world-wide problems.

Growth of Islamic influence and extremism - Ever since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, there has been a renewed push for world conquest by radical elements of the religion. While it is generally thought that this radical element is only about 10% of all Muslims, that number still represents more than 100 million people, and they are the ones with the most power and influence.

Christopher Caldwell's book, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam and the West*. Shows that, in spite of Europe's apparent strength and wealth, they face a grave threat. Their culture is likely to be extinguished in the near future by Islamic culture.

“Moreover, Europeans are politically weak,” explains Caldwell, “because their leaders have capitulated to political correctness and ideals of diversity, which render them unable to criticize any aspect of Islam.”

Terrorism continues to affect people everywhere, and even though there are other kinds of terrorism, such acts by militant Islamists are by far the most numerous.

Turkey, a key player in the Middle East, has apparently become disinterested in becoming a part of the European Union, and would like to resurrect some of the glory of the old Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Turkey has taken a hard turn against Israel, and is trying to re-establish its influence in the Turkic countries of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It has also been more friendly to Russia, Syria and Iran. Terrorism expert Walid Shoebat points out that Turkey was the center of

the Ottoman Empire, the last Muslim coalition of nations. He explains, "In 1924, the Caliphate was dismantled by the West, and this is why Muslims hate the West... In 1928, four years later, the Muslim Brotherhood was born. This is the umbrella of all the Muslim terrorist organizations."

Socialistic trends in the U.S. - Florida Republican congressional candidate Allen West told Newsmax that the United States is nearing a "tipping point" toward socialism when more than half of all Americans are dependent on the government for financial support. West, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, points out that 49% of Americans already pay no income tax, and once we reach a majority that are "wedded to the government" by monthly support checks we will discover what Margaret Thatcher did. She said, "Socialism works very well until you run out of other people's money."

7 – Technological Progress

Two verses in the Book of Daniel set the scene for the connection between today's technological progress and the events of the End Times. One is found in chapter 9 where the dreadful future scenario is told of a powerful and evil ruler who will establish a seven-year peace treaty with Israel, then break it in the middle of that time by defiling the Temple in Jerusalem.

He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. - Daniel 9: 27

This event was mentioned by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount of Olives.

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.¹⁷ Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house.¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak.¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. — Matthew 24:15-21

The most complete prophecy of this desecration is in chapter 13 of the Book of Revelation, where the dictatorial world ruler is called "the beast," and his False Prophet is called "the second beast." At this point, people the world over will be required to worship the beast and display their devotion to him by accepting his "mark."

The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.¹⁶ It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads,¹⁷ so that they could not

buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. – Revelation 13:15-17

With these prophecies in mind, there is a second very short prophecy, that Daniel himself did not understand, but wrote down for our benefit who live in these fateful days.

But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.” - Daniel 12:4

Putting these two streams of prophetic revelation together, we realize that the first one, which includes the ability of a world economic dictator to virtually control the buying and selling of every person, depends on the second one, which provides the technology to exert such power. A generation ago it was a great mystery how such a thing could happen. Even a decade ago it still seemed that there were too many difficulties to literally control all buying and selling.

But now we recognize a strong trend toward electronic commerce, even down to the level of buying a burger and a coke at McDonalds. Computers, big and small, process most of our purchases already. The computer revolution has caused the “information explosion” that Daniel saw when he wrote about the increase of knowledge. And the Internet, still a relatively new development in human history, provides the ability for electronic transactions to “go here and there” all over the world in a fraction of a second.

Here are just some of the latest developments in the fascinating world of technology:

Preference for eCommerce

In Europe use of debit cards increased by 10 per cent, meaning that 77 per cent of its business was now done with debit cards, rather than credit cards, the use of which stalled over the past year. Visa Europe predicted that debit card spending will overtake cash as a method of payment this year. This strong trend toward use of debit cards will enable stronger control over people’s spending because the money must be held in an account (actually just a number in a computer somewhere) before it can be spent.

Rapid growth of Internet users

By the end of 2010, more than 2 billion people were using the Internet. This is nearly a third of the world’s population. The fastest growth pattern was predictably from developing countries. Improvements to the Internet and its successor, Internet 2, or “The Grid,” will enable the additional growth of this medium to reach virtually everyone on the planet. Even those isolated geographically, and unreachable by cable, can access the Internet via satellites.

The obsession with social networking

Facebook, the phenomenon started by 19 year-old college student Mark Zuckerberg just seven years ago has grown more than anyone could have imagined. (My computer’s spell-check dictionary didn’t even recognize the word “Facebook” until I wrote this article and added it to the dictionary!)

By the end of last year, Facebook Inc.'s net worth was estimated at between \$40 and \$50 billion, passing Ebay's \$39.3 billion valuation, and leaving only two internet companies larger than Facebook. Those two are Amazon.com Inc., worth \$74.4 billion, and Google Inc., valued at \$192.9 billion.

The Social Network, a movie about the Facebook phenomenon, swept every single major Best Picture award, from critics' groups to the Golden Globes, and is favored to be best picture at the Academy Awards. In addition, Time Magazine picked Mark Zuckerberg, now 26 years old, as "Person of the Year." In one section of Time's extensive suite of articles about Facebook it shows pictures of one of Facebook's "server farms," a massive high-tech complex linking thousands of servers together. Such computing power serves 500 million (!!!) Facebook friends and takes away all doubt that modern computers can handle the world's commerce as well.

The emergence of smart phones

According to technology experts, the incredible power of the new "smart phones" will soon replace the need for credit and debit cards, as well as the unmanageable passwords that presently bog down eCommerce. Smart phones, such as the iPhone, Androids, and BlackBerry phones, are similar in power to personal computers. My Motorola Droid runs more than 1000 times the speed of my first computers (the Apple I and Apple II), and has 4 million times the memory of those early wonders. It creates and stores documents just like the laptop, saves information about all our contacts and appointments, connects us seamlessly to Facebook and other applications, authenticates who we are so we don't need to keep entering passwords, and even knows where we are because of its GPS chip, and can tell you, through another computer, where it is if lost or stolen. Besides all of this, it has millions of apps (software applications) available, mostly free, to help us with a myriad of tasks.

Now these smart phones are starting to do "contactless transactions" with vendors, and will eventually replace the need for debit and credit cards. All that would be needed now to make them completely unusable to others would be to link them to an implanted transponder such as the VeriChip, which has already been approved for human use. Thus, if the owner and the phone are not together, the phone would not work. This would reduce crime and solve the identity theft problem.

Perhaps this combination will be part of the attraction of the "Mark of the Beast." The name or number that will be placed on the forehead or right hand is an act of worship of the beast. But, at the same time, it might well be that people who do not have an implanted transponder will be forced to take one, and many will consider it a privilege because it will enhance their use of smartphones and allow them to buy and sell, just as the Bible predicted!

APOSTASY AND REVIVAL

8 - Alarming Developments

Corruption of Christianity

Apostasy, or “falling away” of Christians from truth and godliness, is a serious and growing problem.

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

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. – 2 Timothy 3:1-5

In this section we will show how these Scriptures describe the decline of faith in America (as we follow the lead of Europe), but we will see that there is hope for an End-Times revival. Furthermore, Christianity is vigorous and growing in many parts of the globe.

George Barna and his organization have identified six major trends in the Church in America, and they are mostly negative. Here are their major findings:

1. The Christian Church is becoming less theologically literate.
2. Christians are becoming more ingrown and less outreach-oriented.
3. Growing numbers of people are less interested in spiritual principles and more desirous of learning pragmatic solutions for life.
4. Among Christians, interest in participating in community action is escalating.
5. The postmodern insistence on tolerance is winning over the Christian Church.
6. The influence of Christianity on culture and individual lives is largely invisible.

Total attendance in churches in America has declined, but megachurches are generally growing at the expense of smaller churches. People with a consumer mentality are attracted to the churches they think can offer bigger and better programs for their benefit instead of being willing to stay and make their own churches more effective.

Many pastors, in an effort to be please people, ignore the pressing moral issues of the day and fail to teach the Scriptural truth about the consequences of sin. They avoid anything that is controversial. They need to remember what Paul told Timothy:

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³ For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. –2 Timothy 4:2-4

Abortion

The killing of millions of babies in their mothers' wombs continues to violate the Scripture's teaching about the sanctity of life. Visit our Abortion section for helpful news stories and statistics like this one:

“It would have taken about 342 Hiroshima type nuclear attacks to kill as many people as abortion has killed since Roe vs. Wade.”

Homosexuality

Old mainline denominations continue to drift away from clear biblical teaching against homosexuality (Genesis 19:1-26; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10). The Episcopal Church has gone so far as to ordain a lesbian assistant bishop, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which lifted its ban on noncelibate gay clergy a year ago, is experiencing massive defections. Many other denominations are either silent or conciliatory on the issue, following the culture shift instead of leading people to the truth.

A new federal hate-crimes law specifically allows ministers to be critical of homosexuality from the pulpit, but many pastors use this law as an excuse for not teaching what the Bible has to say about the problem.

Organized Atheism

The American Atheists group spent \$20,000 for a billboard in New York that says, "You KNOW it's a Myth. This Season, Celebrate REASON!"

Negative impressions about Christianity

A proposal to build an Islamic center and mosque near Ground Zero has caused national outrage. The debate resulted in some harsh rhetoric and actions from Christian leaders. One response brought negative attention to the church when a Gainesville, Florida, pastor threatened to burn copies of the Qur'an in protest.

Pope Benedict XVI was accused of delaying church action against pedophile priests in Ireland, Germany, the United States and other countries when he led the Vatican office in charge of discipline from 1981 to 2005.

The world was startled to hear about the bankruptcy of the Crystal Cathedral during the year. Poor offerings have affected most churches, and many are actually facing foreclosures.

Blending of Religions

A G8 World Religions Summit was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba from June 21-23. The multi-faith event included Hindu swamis in flowing orange attire, members of the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs dressed in desert garb, Jewish yamakas, cross pendants and clerical collars, Shinto robes, and Orthodox priests in black. There were even some Protestants, including Evangelicals, at the summit.

9 - Encouraging Signs

Is the apostasy so great that there is no hope of revival? Actually, there is reason to believe that there will be a great revival in the End Times. One way of expressing this is the saying, "As the darkness gets deeper, the light shines brighter."

From this year's news we glean two encouraging signs.

1- There is hope for revival in America.

2- Christianity is growing very rapidly in parts of the globe where the Gospel is least known.

Revival in America

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. – 2 Peter 3:8-9

In the same passage (2 Peter 3:11-12) Peter wrote that we can speed the Lord's return. This must mean that by winning other people to Christ we shorten the wait for His return.

There is a connection between the Great Apostasy and an End-Times revival. Looking back through the Bible, we see that The Lord warned people and gave them a chance to repent before his judgment. Difficult times often bring people to their senses about spiritual things. There are several judgments recorded in the Bible where The Lord gave opportunity for people to repent before the catastrophe occurred. The Flood of Noah's time, Sodom and Gomorrah, and especially the story of Jonah and Nineveh are all examples of this truth. Sometimes they repented, and sometimes they did not.

The Midterm Elections in the US were a repudiation of far-left ideology, wasteful spending and socialistic tendencies in the nation. Some of the most prominent newer politicians are strong believers in Jesus Christ and are not ashamed to declare their beliefs.

There are some powerful prayer movements, such as the International House Of Prayer that could blossom into a much-needed revival in our country.

Growth of Christianity Worldwide

Whether or not America will be revived, great things are already happening in many parts of the globe. Contrary to popular opinion, it can be shown that evangelical Christianity is the fastest growing religion in the world.

According to the book "Megashift," by Jim Rutz, Christianity is overlooked as the fastest-growing faith in the world because most surveys only look at the traditional Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church, while ignoring Christian believers who have no part of either.

Rutz claims there are 707 million "switched-on disciples" in this exploding "church," and that if present trends continue, the entire world would be composed of such believers by the year 2032.

Western Christianity is no longer the primary source of missionary activity. Non-Western evangelicals now outnumber Westerners by seven to one! They are nearly invisible to Western observers because they are not associated with the institutional churches at all. In fact, for the most part, they meet in secret, and their evangelism is often validated by miracles.

It is difficult to confirm many of the claims of this book and the movement it describes, and it could lead to the unbiblical conclusion that these new evangelicals will usher in the Millennial Kingdom without the well-known prophecies of the End Times being fulfilled first. We should watch this trend prayerfully and evaluate it biblically.

Final harvest during the Tribulation Period

The Bible says that during the Tribulation there will be a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Revelation 7:9-10).

Jesus taught that Gospel would finally be preached to the whole world.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. - Matthew 24:9-14

When you study this passage in its context, you find that the setting is the first half of the Tribulation, just before the defilement of the Temple and the institution of the Mark of the Beast. During the Tribulation it is likely that all true Christians will be "witnesses" for Christ and many will be "martyrs" (same Greek word, *martureo*).

The two prophets and 144,000 witnesses will be protected by God's power so that they can effectively preach the Gospel during the Tribulation (Revelation 11; Revelation 7; Revelation 14).

The "Mark of the Beast" (Revelation 13) will force people to finally make up their mind, resulting in many brave conversions in spite of the consequences.

Finally the lord will use angels flying in the heavens to finish evangelizing the people during the tribulation (Revelation 14). They will proclaim the eternal gospel to all people and warn them of judgment.

MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

10 – 2012

Declining Concern about 2012

In recent years there has been growing interest in the fact that the Mayan calendars end at 2012, and the assumption that this would mean that the Earth would be destroyed at that time. In 2010 there seemed to be a decline in attention to this matter.

According to Mayan historians, the year 2012 would not be the end of the world, but just the end of their long cycle of time based on their study of the stars. The Egyptians had similar beliefs about this cycle. Both cultures were aware of the fact that the position of the constellations changes very slowly over time, due to the tilt of the Earth's axis. The time it would take for the Constellations to make a complete cycle would be nearly 26,000 years. At the end of that cycle the Earth and Solar System would supposedly be aligned with the galactic plane of the Milky Way.

The 2009 movie "2012" was the ultimate action film. The special effects were numerous and amazing throughout the show. The plot revolved around the idea that huge explosions on the surface of the Sun, known as Coronal Mass Ejections (CME) will increase, causing overheating of the Earth's core and result in worldwide disaster.

NASA, the preeminent authority on space science, says that there is no scientific reason for these dreaded events to take place. They have posted a special website to answer questions about the movie's claims.

Solar Eruptions

However, NASA and other authorities do say that the normal 11-year cycle of solar activity will reach its peak in 2010, and that it seems more intense than ever this time around. In August they observed an unusually significant event. They say that explosion affected an entire hemisphere of the Sun all at once, sending billion-ton clouds of hot gas into space.

"The August 1st event really opened our eyes," says Karel Schrijver of Lockheed Martin's Solar and Astrophysics Lab in Palo Alto, CA. "We see that solar storms can be global events, playing out on scales we scarcely imagined before."

We will continue to monitor these CMEs this year. It should be obvious that if the Tribulation Period were to begin in the near future that these disturbances could account for some of the predicted plagues of that time.

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 remember 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/2010/review2010-1.htm>

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