

Why West Europe Looks East

On occasion European leaders have one scenario in mind, but biblical prophecy indicates quite another. Without the prophetic guidance of the Bible, we cannot understand just where the eastward expansion of the European Union will eventually lead.

Historically, in AD 330 Emperor Constantine the Great founded Constantinople as the eastern capital of his empire, setting in motion events which resulted in splitting the Roman Empire into two great geographical regions – East and West.

In October the European Union (EU) formally opened the door to the East when it offered membership to 10 more nations, effectively uniting one area of the former Roman empire with another. From Estonia in the north to Malta and Cyprus in the south, the European Union is expanding eastwards.

Are we seeing in these latest developments the seeds of the prophetic seventh, and final, resurrection of the Roman Empire under the guise of the EU? Recent media headlines seem to add weight to this future scenario.

‘Euro chiefs press on with Big Band entry of 10 nations,’ said *The Daily Telegraph* of 10 October. This move will add 73 million citizens to the EU. Romano Prodi, President of the European Com-

mission, followed up by stating that enlargement constituted Europe’s ‘political masterpiece’.

Moreover, a *Times* article (31 October) pointed out that the ‘EU blueprint spells the demise of democracy’. There is apprehension about the potentially very undemocratic power base in the Brussels administration, which is frowned on by truly democratic societies where the rights of the people rather than the state are of foremost importance.

The Bible and a united Europe

Bible prophecy reveals that at the end-time of human government, a final superpower will arise that will surprise the world at large with its ambitions to establish a regime that clashes with divinely established concepts revealed in the Bible. Of this final power the Scripture states, ‘And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life, when they see the beast that was, and is

not, and yet is’ (Revelation 17:8). The Bible uses the word *beast* to describe ruling empires (Daniel 7:23).

In that same chapter in Revelation we see nations giving up

In the book of Revelation we see nations giving up their national sovereignty.

their national sovereignty for the benefit of the beast power. ‘These are of *one* mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast’ (verse 13). The following verse leaves no doubt that this is referring to the time of the end.

In regard to independent nations being willing to give up their sovereignty, British Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan-Smith stated recently that if he became Prime Minister he would be ‘implacably opposed to a federal superstate’ (*The Daily Telegraph*, 10 October). ‘The implication of his remarks was that as [a possible future] Prime Minister he would

oppose any further handover of powers to Brussels.'

A British departure?

It may be that the United Kingdom, perhaps the Republic of Ireland, and maybe even some other northwest European nations in Scandinavia, now members of the EU, may opt out of giving away any further indigenous authority to Europe. Whatever may transpire on this front in the coming months and years, the Bible is crystal clear about a future transference of power from national governments to one central authority, a future European superstate. It's biblically prophesied to happen, and then no nation will be in a position to

prevent its sovereign power being transferred to the EU.

A recent article in *The Sunday Times* stated that 'the proposals included a single institutional structure with its own legal identity, a 'bill of rights' like those enacted in many nation states, and a chapter on a common European citizenship' (27 October).

In this drive for a federal state, united in purpose, the lack of a single leader, or president, of the EU remains. In his analysis of the future of the EU, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, states, 'With successive treaties, the EU has expanded its role to include the euro, a 60,000-man Rapid Reaction Force, an embryonic foreign ministry in

Brussels, a vast array of regulatory agencies, and a common judicial

sphere backed by a proto-FBI at Europol, yet it lacks a coherent or accountable executive' (*The Daily Telegraph* (21 October). However, serious plans are already in the making to put a strong executive in place. As *The Financial Times* recently reported, 'Romano Prodi, European Commission president, is to join forces with Gerhard Schröder to strengthen the EU executive' (1 November).

There are additional dilemmas which in future may very well trigger a series of crises which would require radical remedies. The prophecy in the book of Revelation about the last resurrection of the 'Roman Empire' indicates that the only way to solve these problems is to transfer national sovereignty to a central authority, especially when the survival of the European Union may be at stake.

Rome's final revival

Referring to this last revival of the Roman Empire, in concept if not in name, the Bible shows that there will be serious conflicts, especially between church and state (Revelation 17:16). An end-time religious power and a secular state cannot co-exist for long. Verse 12 shows that this unnatural co-existence will be of very short duration.

The biblical beast power of Revelation is prophetically linked with the fourth kingdom of Daniel's vision (Daniel 2:40). Here we see that the last resurrection of the fourth kingdom will be divided, being described as 'partly of clay and partly of iron' (verses 41- 42). (To properly understand the complete prophetic picture, please request our free brochure *The Book of*

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A United States of Europe?

According to a recent report, 'The European Union could be renamed the United States of Europe . . . Without suggesting a preference, M Giscard d'Estaing's report said the union could be called the European Community, the European Union, United Europe or the United States of Europe' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 29 October). This suggestion was part of the first draft of a new constitution for the EU.

Christopher Booker's Notebook, a regular column in *The Sunday Telegraph*, headlined a recent article with the provocative title, 'A superstate half a century in the making'. Mr Booker pointed out that 'this constitution was planned more than 50 years ago, as the concluding move in a secretive process intended to take decades. Only now is it emerging just how carefully planned this project has

been; and how deliberately its instigators decided to pretend that it was concerned only with economic co-operation, until their political agenda could be brought into the open. Drawing on thousands of published and unpublished documentary sources, Dr Richard North, a research director with the European Parliament, has been assembling evidence for a "secret history" of the European Union' (3 November).

The need for such a constitution was first mentioned by a young Italian Communist in 1944. He believed that 'the project would have to be put into place gradually, without the peoples of Europe realising what was afoot until they were presented with a constitution as the end of the process.' Christopher Booker concluded his column with the simple statement that 'Everything is unfolding according to plan'.

John Ross Schroeder

Remembering the Feast of Tabernacles

A relatively small number of our readership observed the Feast of Tabernacles this autumn. We thought that the rest of our readers might enjoy a brief retrospective summary of the spiritual impact of this year's feast.

Although the Feast of Tabernacles 2002 is now in the past, there is still much to be learned from its observance. Church members kept this autumn festival in various locations. Some observed it in one of the nations of the European continent or attended an American site. In the United Kingdom, most British members of United Church of God congregations attended the Feast in Grange-over-Sands in the southern Lake District, along with a number of visitors from other parts of the world, including the United States, the Bahamas, Malawi, Singapore and Canada. But wherever they may have attended, the Feast of 2002 has passed into history.

For those relatively unfamiliar with the biblical festivals, these annual occasions are either memorial in nature, or they explain just how major future fulfilments of God's overall plan in biblical prophecy will work out. However, their great purpose involves far more than just a lingering memory of an enjoyable eight days.

Much more than a lingering memory

This year those who attended the festival in Grange-over-Sands had a remarkable feast of messages that, even though prepared quite independently, nevertheless followed a theme. That theme focused on the need for us to be taking very seriously the reality of the return of Jesus Christ and the consequent establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth. Essentially this will mean the replacement of all human governments. 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!' (Revelation 11:15).

Human governments have proven themselves over the millennia to be incapable of truly administering and governing people *for their benefit*. Ruling with love and concern and the interests of the people at heart will make the governance of the world tomorrow vastly different from human governance today. Attendees were graphically reminded

of the need to be preparing now to rule with Jesus Christ, learning to follow His example of truly loving leadership.

Those who attended this autumn festival were encouraged to ask themselves questions such as:

- Just where do we stand before God?
- How is our preparation going for the world tomorrow, when Christ returns to earth, and we begin the mammoth task of working with the people who have survived the tumultuous events immediately preceding His return?

The apostle Paul reminds us that we were once alienated from God, but we have been reconciled by the death of Christ so that we could then be presented to God holy, blameless and above reproach. But then he continues: 'If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel . . .' (Colossians 1:21-23). There it is, that great big word *if*. Will we continue? Will we move on as the

Preaching the Gospel, Preparing a People

If you would like to know more about the United Church of God, please request your free copy of our brand-new full-colour brochure, *This Is the United Church of God*. It outlines the mission and key activities of the Church as well as the beliefs that drive them. It tells how we express our commitment to serve humanity by preaching and publishing the gospel.

Feast sermons encouraged us to do, and become increasingly, day by day, more like Jesus Christ? (see Galatians 2:20).

When you truly understand the Creator's great purpose, God's people are called to govern a planet and its people (see Revelation 5:10; 20:1-6). But are we ready for that yet?

Over the years those who attend the Feast of Tabernacles have noticed that the themes for festival sermons dovetailed into one another to form a remarkable unity of purpose. God guides His ministers in presenting material so that His people may be served and helped in their development and preparation to work with Jesus Christ to serve a suffering humanity.

The return of Christ

Consider the reality of the return of Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter said that he had to remind people of these things so that they can understand and internalise that reality. In 2 Peter 3:3-4, he says we need to be mindful that in the last days there will be people walking according to their own lusts, scoffing at the reality of the return of Jesus Christ.

They will be blind to what is happening to our world, just as the people were in the days of Noah. Nevertheless, what God had said would occur *did* happen! The flood inundated the earth.

In verse 9 Peter points out that God is very, very patient with us. He gives us the time we need because He wants all of us to be there, to meet Jesus Christ and to serve with Him.

The question then arises, 'Are we in the last days?'

When we look at the world situation in the light of Daniel 2,

Matthew 24 and Revelation 17, we see a number of these prophesied trends and events shaping up on the world scene right before our eyes. There will, of course, be those of whom Peter spoke, who in those very last days will still be scoffing at what we might say. They will read these very same passages and ignore the truth contained in them, refusing to look honestly at the mighty pressures and severe conflicts in the world around us.

Europe's coming role

They will refuse to recognise what is happening on the continent of Europe. The great discussion as I

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write is about the imminent enlargement of the European Union by 10 nations on the eastern boundary.

It may be that none of them will actually enter the euro area. Instead they may provide manpower and be a buffer zone against Russia, while the power of the heartland, Germany and France, grows and strengthens and drives the whole structure forward. (For an overall look at some of these developments, please see the lead article in this issue of the Supplement, 'Why West Europe Looks East'.)

Also if you haven't read the free

brochures *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* and *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*, please be sure to request them.

These events should strongly remind God's people to move on with their preparation to serve, to be ready to meet Jesus Christ, to prepare themselves to be a part of a government that will truly *serve* the people.

The major British political parties have recently had their various annual party conferences. So, too, has the Church of God.

Attending the Feast

If you have never had the privilege of attending the autumn Feast of Tabernacles, and would like to know more about this annual festival, please write for our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.

Next year (2003) you may want to consider attending this Feast with God's people. If you would like to talk to a representative of the United Church of God about this possibility, please send your request to our regional office (see box on page 7).

*John Jewell, CEO
United Church of God, British Isles*

West Europe Looks East

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Revelation Unveiled.)

Over a period of time, is the democratic EU gradually being turned into the biblical 'beast' power? One thing is biblically sure. Partially on account of the national sins of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, 'God has put it into their hearts [these future European heads of state] to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give

Refining Character: An Ancient Analogy

'Each one's work will become manifest . . . and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is' (1 Corinthians 3:13).

Throughout the Bible, God uses many analogies to help us better understand His thoughts and goals. He describes Himself as a refiner and purifier of silver and gold: 'He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness' (Malachi 3:3).

This analogy is a significant declaration by God about Himself and what He intends for His people. The Hebrew prophet Malachi uses the words *refine*, *purify* and *purge*, all of which express the concept of cleansing and removing imperfections by a process – a process we as Christians must undergo if we are to mature in Christian character and become perfect like God (Matthew 5:48).

The concept of becoming perfect or pure is a vast topic, but a closer examination of the way and manner in which silver and gold are refined highlights a number of spiritual parallels that will be of assistance in our struggle to live God's way.

Silver refining in the ancient world

Prior to 500 BC silver was regarded as the most valuable metal on earth. It was only during Solomon's reign that gold replaced silver as

The dross was blown over the edge of the crucible and burned up in the furnace.

the most precious metal. Gold and silver share some important properties that explain why they are regarded so highly:

- They are very ductile and malleable, making them easy to mould.
- They have a brilliant metallic lustre or shine, making them ideal for jewellery.
- Neither metal reacts with water or air – even at high temperatures. They remain inert, making them quite different from other metals.

The refining of both gold and silver followed a similar process. The impure or naturally occurring gold or silver was placed with pieces of lead into a crucible-type vessel, which was then put into a furnace, where the metal melted

and mixed with the lead, forming a molten liquid. Forced air was then blown onto the surface of the molten metal. (As mentioned previously, gold and silver do not react with the air, whereas the lead and any impurities like tin, copper and iron do.)

Once the lead came into contact with the air, it reacted and circulated through the molten metal, absorbing all the impurities to form a mixture called *dross*, which vapourised or floated to the surface. The floating dross was then blown over the edge of the crucible and burned up in the furnace, with the pure gold or silver being left behind in the crucible. This process is referred to in the Bible when God sent the prophet Jeremiah to test and refine the Israelites.

The refining process

Bronze and iron, which are impurities in silver and gold, are likened to the impure Israelites in the Bible: 'I have set you as an assayer and a fortress among My people, that you may know and test their way. They are all stubborn rebels, walking as slanderers. They

are bronze and iron, they are all corrupters; the bellows blow fiercely, the lead is consumed by the fire; the smelter refines in vain, for the wicked are not drawn off. People will call them rejected silver, because the Lord has rejected them' (Jeremiah 6:27-30).

In this particular example, even though the air blows fiercely and the lead is consumed, the dross is still not drawn off and the wicked still remain. A similar analogy is drawn in Ezekiel 22:18.

In the silver-refining process, the dross is separated and burned up, which is also what God intends for the wicked. Christians should be like pure silver or gold and not the dross. We must repent and be baptised, accepting Christ's awesome sacrifice.

Then we must grow in our personal commitment to God's way of life and His Church (2 Timothy 2:22, 2 Peter 3:18).

Looking once again at the analogy of refining silver, we see that we cannot purify ourselves from sin by our own efforts, just as silver does not refine itself or separate itself from the dross. It is the heat of the furnace and the forced air that removes the dross.

How Christ purifies Christians

Christians are cleansed by Christ's sacrifice (Hebrews 9:13-14). Upon true repentance we are immersed in water to symbolise the cleansing of our life from sin. But let's pursue further the analogy of the refining of gold and silver.

The final test gold and silver undergo to determine their purity is to be assayed by fire. Earlier we read in Jeremiah that he was sent to assay and test the Israelites. *To assay*, in reference to metals, means to *test the purity*. Gold or silver is

tested by taking a sample, weighing it, refining it, and then reweighing *the now pure metal*. If there is no change in weight the metal is pure. If a loss of weight results, then it is impure.

This idea of a purifying test is an important concept for a Christian: 'Each one's work will become clear . . . because it will be revealed by fire . . . If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire' (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

Also there is the concept of fire being used to test and to save: 'I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name,

*We cannot purify ourselves from sin
by our own efforts, just as silver
does not refine itself or
separate itself from the dross.*

and I will answer them. I will say, "This is My people"; and each one will say, "The Lord is my God"' (Zechariah 13:9).

When Christians are assayed by fiery trials, we are tested to reveal our impurities, but at the same time, we are also refined. Trials reveal our weaknesses, but as we persevere we grow and overcome them. Only the hot temperatures of the furnace can refine silver and gold, and Christians also need to experience some heat to change (Isaiah 48:10).

God watches closely during trials

When we think of examples of affliction or trials, we tend to think of major events like Christ's sacrifice or Job's severe trials. God, however, views all trials, great and small, as a means to perfect us.

During my first three years of high school, I was verbally and physically abused by a group of peers. It was not a life-threatening situation, but nevertheless one which I found difficult and viewed as a trial.

In such situations we can take comfort in knowing that God is watching closely. Once again the analogy of the refining of silver and gold illustrates this. During the refining process the heat of the furnace is critical. If it is too severe the silver or gold will be vaporised and lost. If it is too cold some of the lead will remain and the metal will be impure. During the refining process the smith watches the temperature closely, making sure that it stays exactly right.

In the same way the severity of our trials is important to God. He wants us to become pure, but never to be lost. God promises He will not tempt or test us beyond what we are able to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Not only do we have this promise to encourage us, but we also know that our suffering is only for a short time (1 Peter 5:10; 2 Corinthians 4:16-17).

As the silver or gold nears the final stage of refining it experiences a reaction known as *brightening*. When the last of the impurities are consumed the now pure molten metal emits a bright flash of light and solidifies. Similarly, as Christians, we all eagerly look forward to the *brightening* of God's chosen people – the firstfruits of God and Christ.

Russell Barnett

Russell Barnett presented this material at the summer Regional Youth Weekend in Brisbane, Australia. Russell attends the Brisbane church and is completing the final year of a PhD in aluminium casting.

Piggyback

A father and his young daughter face a challenging quest together.

A recent experience left a deep impression on me. I was part of a group of nine people that attempted to climb Ruby Mountain in the Canadian Rockies. Among these nine was a father and his seven-year-old daughter who 'really' wanted to climb the mountain.

From our camp, it was close to five miles to reach the south base of the mountain. Once there, we faced a short but quite challenging climb to get to the lower end of the incline that led to the peak, and then a mile of uphill climbing on a fairly even, but nevertheless exhausting, slope.

Fading aspiration

After the first few miles, the smallest legs in the party began to tire and the aspiration that was there at first began to fade. That was when the most interesting example of love and determination from her father really began. Our pace slowed and there were pauses to rest. For a little while we all wondered if we could manage the climb before it became too dark. The father encouraged the little girl, rested with her, challenged her, 'bribed' her and often would bend down and 'piggyback' his daughter for a while when she could or would go no further.

It took almost four hours to cover the first stage. By about 2:30 pm we finally arrived above the challenging part onto the lower slope of Ruby. Since this was my son and granddaughter, I often was close and heard the exchanges. She did not want to go any further. She did not want to climb the mountain –

and always the steady and patient voice of her father encouraged her. Dad did not seem to get tired or discouraged throughout the whole experience. He seemed to sense that it had become very important that she complete the climb. This was no longer just a mountain we were climbing; it was an event in her life that would have a great impact.

Race to the top

Although progress seemed slow, the top of the mountain finally got closer. Soon three older children who were with us reached the top and called down that they had arrived. It was about 5 pm. The seven-year-old ran the last 200 feet up the mountain. She had made it!

To my amazement, on the descent my granddaughter walked all the way down the slope, clambered down the challenging portion and walked the remaining almost five miles back to camp without once asking for a 'piggyback' ride. She had changed. All the efforts of her father had been rewarded.

The spiritual mountain

Mankind has been created to become like God. That is a very high mountain and we are not able to climb it alone. God knows the way. He knows the suffering and effort that is needed. He is a loving Father who is determined that His children will reach the top. He too has carried his children 'piggyback' when they could go no further. He too exhibits endless patience and love.

There is only one way to climb a mountain. One starts at the bottom

and slowly, sometimes painfully, works toward reaching the top. Steps may have to be retraced; rests will need to be taken. Refreshment is needed. Encouragement and support are requirements for the journey. The Bible says that even Jesus was 'made perfect' by what He suffered (Hebrews 2:10).

God knows that the benefits of reaching the top are worth every bit of suffering along the way. The apostle Paul stated that he counted nothing he had lost to be as important as attaining the goal (Philippians 3:8-11). Paul also shows that God helps the weak (Romans 14:4).

Setting the will, fighting both fatigue and the urge to quit, not always taking the easy road – all of these, and more, are the steps we must take to reach the top of any mountain. One day, we will stand on the peak of that spiritual mountain. We will know it was worth the climb.

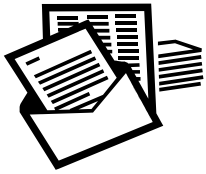
Robert Berendt

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Letters From Our Readers

Plight of African farmers

What a blessing to receive your bimonthly *Good News*, a magazine with no advertisements and junk articles – a magazine which every family should read. As a matter of interest I am South African, but with Namibian citizenship, 63 years old, working in Austria due to the economic situation in Namibia. I am a farmer and like the Zimbabwean farmers whose land is being repossessed, we are facing the same thing in Namibia. Your prayers will be greatly appreciated.

B U, Austria

Seeking the truth

After lapsing for nearly 15 years, I am praying and reading God's Word again. This is due mainly to publications I have received from *The Good News*. I would like to worship the Lord in the way that he has set out for mankind. Would it be possible to receive any material relating to festivals, holidays, etc? Does a Christian still have to keep the Ten Commandments?

D D, Sheffield

• *That really is good news! Yes, God does want a Christian to observe the Ten Commandments. Our booklets about the commandments and the festivals have been posted to you.*

I am a 25-year-old female Christian living in the Netherlands. God bless you for the wonderful

work you are doing. I found your website through a link and can't tell you how glad I was. Your magazine and booklets are so enlightening and so very helpful to live a Christian life.

C B, Eindhoven, Netherlands

I find the literature *The Good News* very interesting and informative regarding the Bible, the Holy Word of God. I am a New Testament Christian and a Berean type to check all things. I request *Is the Bible True?*

M F, Malta

Keep up the good work. The message is getting across. I personally found my way through the example and encouragement of a believer in God's great plan for us.

S S, Basingstoke

The British & European Supplement

I recently came across a copy of the May/June *British & European Supplement to The Good News* and found it very useful and helpful. Would you be so kind to send me some literature about the United Church of God – British Isles? I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

W L T, Newport, South Wales

• *An article about the Church in the British Isles has been posted, along with a copy of our new brochure, This Is the United Church of God, which is described in the box at the bottom of page 3.*

A reader from Israel

Thank you for the free educational material you provide in the public interest, especially for the magazines that you have sent. They are helpful for my Bible study. I received my first lesson of your *Bible Study Course* on Tuesday and read the whole thing.

T S, Tel-Aviv, Israel

About the Trinity

There is a scripture in 1 John 5:7-8 about the Trinity. I read about it in one of your magazines and I am trying to understand what the Trinity really is.

J W, Gosport, Hampshire

• *The doctrine of the Trinity is the belief that God consists of three distinct persons or entities – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. However, New Testament evidence does not support this teaching. Our free booklet Who Is God? has two chapters explaining the Trinity and the true nature of the Holy Spirit. It also shows that 1 John 5:7-8 is a spurious addition to the biblical text. Please request Who Is God?*

Helping spread the gospel

Thank you for sending me your free literature. To show my appreciation I would like you to accept this small donation towards the cost of publishing and distribution. Keep up the good work.

G E G, Rushden, Northants

How our literature is funded

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