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Notes

PREPARING FOR THE COMING TRIBULATION

By Corrie Ten Boom

End Times Digest Comment: Corrie Ten Boom was a beloved saint who was imprisoned by the Nazis during W.W.II because she and her family were assisting the Jews. Many Christians are familiar with her experience, along with her sister Betsy, in the concentration camp. After her release, Corrie traveled all over the world and had an impact on millions of lives. She has now gone on to her rest with the Lord. At the end of this age, Jesus Christ Himself told us that there would be a time of birth pangs which would precede the great tribulation (Matt. 24). We cannot know for sure if we are in the time of birth pangs, but it is interesting to note that all of the things that Jesus said would occur in it are happening today. If we are in the time of birth pangs, then the great tribulation could start soon. We are not saying that is will, but it is certainly getting closer. Therefore, we felt it important to share with you this pertinent message for the church today.

The following piece is one of the later things that she wrote concerning Christians and the great tribulation.

... FALSE TEACHERS: There are some among us teaching there will be no tribulation, that the Christians will be able to escape all this. These are the false teachers Jesus was warning us to expect in the later days. Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world.

I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution. In China the Christians [were] told, "Don't worry, before the tribulation comes, you will be translated—raptured." Then came the terrible persecutions. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a Bishop from China say, sadly, "We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecutions rather than telling them Jesus would come first." Turning to me he said, "You still have time. Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecutions, how to stand when the tribulation comes—to stand and not faint."

...In America the churches sing, "Let thy congregation escape tribulation." but in Africa the tribulation has already arrived. This last year alone more than two hundred thousand Christians were martyred in Africa. Now, things like that never



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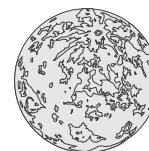
get into the newspapers because they cause bad political relations. But I know. I have been there. We need to think about that when we sit down in our nice houses with our nice clothes and eat our steak dinners.

Many, many members of the body of Christ are being tortured to death at this very moment, yet we continue right on as though we are all going to escape the tribulation. Several years ago I was in Africa in a nation where a new government had come into power. The first night I was there some of the Christians were commanded to come to the police station and register. When they arrived they were arrested and the same night were executed. The next day the same thing happened with other Christians. The third day it was the same. All the Christians in the district were being systematically murdered.

In the coming persecutions we must be ready to help each other and encourage each other. But we must not wait until tribulation comes before starting. The fruit of the Spirit should be the dominant force of every Christian's life. Many are fearful of the coming tribulation—they want to run. I, too am a little bit afraid when I think that after all my eighty years, including that horrible time in the concentration camp, that I might have to go through the tribulation also. But when I read my Bible I am glad. When I am weak, then I shall be strong, the Bible says.

When Betsy and I were prisoners for the Lord we were very weak—but we got power because the Holy Spirit was on us. That mighty inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit helped us through that horrible suffering. Now, you will not be strong in yourself when the tribulation comes. Rather, you will be strong in the power of Him who will not forsake you. He will always be with you. For 76 years, I have known the Lord and not once has He ever left me, or let me down. Job 13:15: For I know that to all who overcome He shall give the crown of life. Hallelujah! (Rev. 2:10)

Source: End Times News Digest—September 1996



Text

Notes

BEHOLD!

The *Idou* Commands in Revelation

1. He comes with clouds...	1.7
2. I became dead...and I am living unto the ages of the ages...	1.18
3. The devil will cast some of you in prison...	2.10
4. I will cast [Jezebel] onto a bed of great tribulation...	2.22
5. I have given you an open door...	3.8
6. The synagogue of Satan...will worship before you...	3.9
7. I stand at the door and knock...	3.20
8. A door opened in heaven...	4.1
9. A throne set in heaven...	4.2
10. The Lion of Judah overcame...	5.5
11. A white horse...	6.2
12. A black horse...	6.5
13. A pale horse...	6.8
14. A great multitude...	7.9
15. Two more woes come...	9.12
16. A third woe comes quickly...	11.14
17. A great dragon...	12.3
18. The lamb...on Mt. Zion...	14.1
19. Son of Man...sitting on a white cloud...	14.14
20. I come like a thief...	16.15
21. A white horse...	19.11
22. The tabernacle of God is with men...	21.3
23. I am making all things new...	21.5
24. I come shortly...	22.7
25. I come shortly...	22.12

The Greek term *idou* (ἰδοὺ), meaning *Behold!* is technically a command, but it's also a rhetorical and literary device used simply to emphasize a point, the way we might use the phrases, "Get a load o' this!" or "Let me make this one thing perfectly clear." Therefore, the occurrences of *idou* in the Revelation provide a quick summary of points and visionary elements emphasized in the book.



Notes

AUGUSTINE'S THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

An Excerpt from

Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing

by Peter Kreeft

“Thou hast made us for thyself, and [therefore] our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.”

The great Augustine, who penned that sentence, one of the most profound in all human writing, also proposed the following little thought experiment to show you, his reader, that your deepest desire is indeed the desire for God.

Imagine God appeared to you and said, “I’ll make a deal with you if you wish. I’ll give you anything and everything you ask: pleasure, power, honor, wealth, freedom, even peace of mind and a good conscience. Nothing will be a sin; nothing will be forbidden; and nothing will be impossible for you. You will never be bored and you will never die. Only...you shall never see my face.”

Did you notice that unspeakable chill in your deepest heart at those last words? Did your surface desires leap after the first part of God’s deal and your deepest desire freeze in standstill shock at “you shall never see my face”? Your surface mind, which is in touch with your surface desires, may not admit it, but your deepest mind, which knows your deepest desires, knows it: you want God more than everything else in the world. Your heart too is restless until it rests in him.

Ivan Sees The New Jerusalem

An Excerpt from *Vanya* by Myrna Grant

Although the regulation bunk beds were only two feet wide and hard, Ivan stretched out between sheets and beneath a blanket and thanked God for the luxury. For the first time in 1971 he was in bed. No hours in the cold. No interrogations in the snow, in the officer's rooms. No watching the moon set behind the tiny park in the central square. Even before taps were sounded, Ivan was blissfully asleep.

Although he had only heard it once before, the Voice was so familiar Ivan was instantly awake. "Vanya, arise!" In a second he was on his feet between the bunks gazing at the crystal brilliance of the angel. His mind was working rapidly. He was aware that no sleeping soldier in the rows of bunks stirred. Mechanically he began to pull on his trousers and feel for his shoes, his eyes never leaving the radiant loveliness of the being before him. The angel's gaze was so full of love he felt no fear. In an instant they began to rise, and effortlessly the ceiling opened, and then the barracks's roof and Ivan and the angel flew through time and space to another world.

The grass was deep and lush and seemed to stretch to the very horizon of this unfamiliar planet. It was a fresh and vivid green. Dazed, Ivan followed the angel, and after what seemed a long time they came to a brook. Its waters were as clear as glass so Ivan could see to the bed of the stream, and the brightness of the water dazzled his eyes. The angel passed over the brook without effort and turned questioningly when Ivan held back.

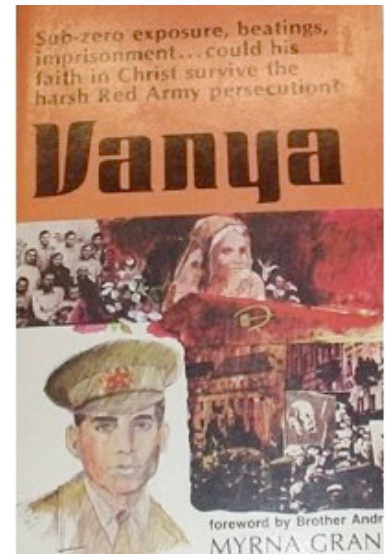
"Why do you fear, Vanya?" The voice was unhurried and tender. Inexplicably a horror of snakes had entered Ivan's mind.

"Snakes." As he said the word his glance moved through thick grass under his feet. The strangeness of what was happening gripped him in an unreasoning fear.

Although the angel was a distance from him, Ivan heard his voice as if the shining creature were standing by his side. "Do not be afraid. You are with me. Here it is not as on the earth. Here there are no snakes."

As suddenly as it had come, the fear left him, and Ivan moved easily over the brook. In the brilliance of this world, every detail of blade of grass and petal of flower stood out as if floodlit. The patterns of the bark upon the trees were indescribably beautiful. The expanse of the branches were profoundly graceful, so luminous that the light seemed to pour from within each tree. Instinctively Ivan lifted his eyes to sky, gazing in every direction. There was no sun.

When his eyes returned to the angel there was a form beside the being, more exalted and at the same time somehow more loving in his brilliance than even the angel. In some way the angel seemed to do him deference, and Ivan knew him to be the apostle John. Through the angel, the apostle communicated with him. Ivan stood transfixed, his mind absorbing every holy word. A series of three beings followed the apostle, recognized in some mysterious way by Ivan to be David, Moses, and Daniel. So intense was Ivan's concentration and so overwhelming his awe and joy that



when the last form was gone Ivan felt he would fall into a deep sleep. But the angel, now alone in the streaming light, spoke again.

“We have traveled a long way and you are tired. Come and sit.”

The tree under which Ivan sat was large and welcoming with a fragrance that reminded him in some unexplained way of the grape fields of Moldavia. If the angel had not spoken again Ivan felt he would be content to sit forever, smelling the tree and looking at the landscape in the sparkling light.

“I wish to show you the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem. But if you see it as it is, you cannot remain in the body you now have. And there is still much work for you left on earth.” There seemed a silence before the angel resumed speaking. “We will fly together to another planet and I will show you the light of this city for you to know, while you are yet alive in your earth body, that in certainty there is a new Jerusalem.”

In an instant they flew to another planet where there were high mountains. Again, the glory of the light illuminated every detail of this world. Ivan’s gaze rested on diamond streams coursing down the mountain slopes into mists that rose from vividly green valleys. When they had come to a very deep canyon, the angel and Ivan descended until they were at the bottom.

The angel seemed a flame of joy, the Voice more ceremonious and jubilant than Ivan had yet heard it. “Vanya, look upward and you will see this light of the new Jerusalem.”

At the first glance Ivan recoiled in dismay. The brilliance was so intense that even though he had seen it only for a second, he was sure he had been blinded. The angel spoke immediately. “Nothing will happen to you. Look.”

No man rescued from a desert ever drank water more thirstily than Ivan drank in the splendor of that light. So great was its power it could be felt, tasted, heard. The sight of it was not a sensation of his eyes but of his whole being. Ivan could have wept with grief and disappointment when the angel said, “The time has come to fly back to earth.”

At the instant that Ivan’s feet touched the floor beside his bunk, three things happened. The angel disappeared, the bugle for reveille sounded, and the lights in the room were snapped on. Staring stupidly at his neat bed and himself fully dressed, Ivan heard a gentle laugh from the bunk beside him. Grigorii Fedorovich Chernykh, his neighbor, was also a Moldavian and took a fraternal interest in his strange countryman. Now Chernykh was pulling himself expertly out of his bunk and shoving his feet into trouser legs as he whispered in a conspiratorial tone. “Vanya, where were you last night?”

With a tremendous effort Ivan pulled his thoughts together. The barrack was alive with bodies hurtling past his bunk to the door. Good-natured bantering, the groaning of exhausted soldiers, the flash of uniforms seemed unreal. He turned to look intently at Chernykh.

“You don’t mean that you didn’t see me getting undressed and into bed last night” We turned in at the same time.”

Chernykh was buttoning his shirt rapidly. “You went to bed the same time as I did, all right, and to sleep, too. But you didn’t sleep long. I woke up about three A.M. and your bunk was empty. Vanya, you were nowhere in this room.” Reaching for his jacket, he gave Ivan a sly smile. “Of all people, did you actually go A.W.O.L. last night?”

He had not been dreaming! He *had* journeyed with the angel! Excitement tore through Ivan like electricity. They were moving hurriedly to the door.

His voice shook as he spoke. “Let’s ask the duty officer if anyone left during the night.”

The duty officer was indignant. “Certainly no one left the room. Get going! Are you trying to get me arrested?”

Ivan and Grigorii Chernykh moved out into the morning, both in silence. Finally Chernykh broke the spell of strangeness with a question, and Ivan began to tell him about the angel....

THE WHITE STONE

A Precious Gem From The Glorified Christ

By Roderick A. Graciano

Who Is The Overcomer

The glorified Christ described by the apostle John in Revelation, chapter one, makes spectacular promises in the following chapters of the book. These promises are addressed to “him who overcomes” (Rev. 2.7, etc.), so we naturally wonder, who is this overcomer? Our question is answered as we read the Revelation and discover that the “overcomer” is anyone who trusts Christ to the end, overcoming every temptation to abandon their faith. We know that this final victory over unbelief will be the outcome for every true child of God. As John wrote in 1 John 5.4: “...everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even *our faith*.” Assuredly then, the promises of Christ to the overcomer are promises to every Christian, rather than to some elite subset within the Christian church. Therefore each of us who believe can clutch these promises to our hearts and rejoice in them.

The promise to the overcomer that has most delighted me lately is in Revelation 2.17. Christ promises the overcomer a white stone. “What?” you might ask, “Who would reward his loved ones with a stone?” This promise is difficult to appreciate at first glance, but the white stone is actually a promise of acquittal, admittance, identity and intimacy.

Stone of Acquittal

A custom was of old, and still remains,
Which life or death by suffrages ordains:
White stones and black
 within an urn are cast,
The first absolve, but fate is in the last.

(Ovid, *Metam.* lib. xv., ver. 41)

Ovid’s verse above describes how juries in the Mediterranean world of the apostle John’s day voted using pebbles. As a juror made his way to the place where trials were held, he would pick up a black pebble and a white one along the path. Later, after both sides of a case were presented, each juror would vote by approaching an urn set up for the purpose, and dropping either their black or their white pebble into it. A black pebble was a vote to condemn the defendant, a white pebble a vote to acquit. Once all the jurors had cast their votes, the urn would be upended, the white and black stones counted and the case decided accordingly.

Now let us recall that we ourselves were each put on trial at Mt. Sinai. Our jurors were the commandments of God. Each and every one of those holy jurors dropped a black pebble into the urn as





a vote against us, “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking *all* of it” (James 2.10). When the urn was inverted, pouring forth the stones to be counted, however, they were all found to be gleaming white.

How did all the pebbles turn white at our trial before the divine tribunal? Clearly it was a miracle like the one Ovid describes in his *Metamorphoses* (Book 15, Fable 1). In that story, Hercules magically turned all the black stones in the urn white to get Myscelos acquitted for illegally attempting to leave Argos. Myscelos *was* guilty, however, and *so are we*. Who would turn our stones white, and what has become of justice? In our case, it was the judge Himself who performed the miracle, but he did not *turn* the black stones white: he *exchanged* them. He placed a white stone in each of our hands and took all of our black ones for himself. Then he carried all our black stones to the cross where He himself satisfied justice by accepting condemnation in our place. Now we hold the white stone as a sign of our eternal acquittal.

Stone of Admittance

Besides acquittal, white stones had another connotation in antiquity. When a gladiator or athlete performed victoriously in the arena, a nobleman might send the champion a white stone called a *tessera hospitalis*. This stone, with the noble patron’s name etched upon it, served as a pass granting the champion admittance into the nobleman’s post-contest festivities. In similar fashion, once the Christian overcomer has “fought the good fight” and won the contest of faith, his white stone will admit him into the King’s banquet. The King Himself will greet the faithful overcomer with the words, “enter into the joy of your master” (Mat. 25.21).

Unlike the gladiators of old, however, the Christian overcomer will not leave the banquet with the same rank he possessed when he entered it. As Paul wrote, “if we endure, we will also *reign*

with him” (2 Tim. 2.12). The Christian overcomer who enters the post-contest banquet of his Lord will emerge from it a co-regent with his master, a king in his master’s eternal kingdom (Rev. 5.10; 22.3-5). That is not all. The overcomer will receive an even more important identity at this “wedding supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19.9). That additional identity is signified by the name etched on the white stone, for unlike the *tessera hospitalis*, the white stone of the Christian overcomer bears his own name, rather than the name of his benefactor.

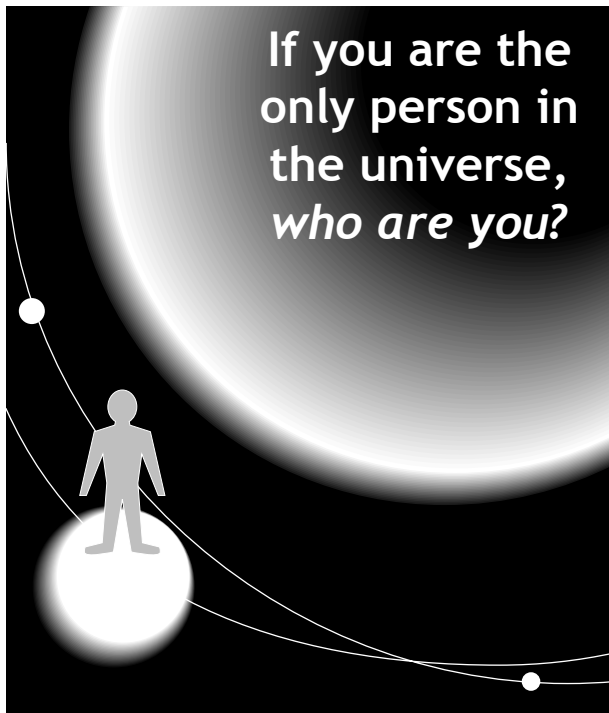
Stone of Identity

Christ declares that each overcomer’s white stone conveys a name to its recipient that is “known *only* to him who receives it.” The name etched in the stone is new, permanent and *unique*. Perhaps the name will be like the Indian names in the film *Dances With Wolves*. It will say something about a special quality or accomplishment of the recipient, like “Evangelized Cannibals” or “Successfully Reared Teenagers.” The important thing is that by its uniqueness the name on the white stone represents the gift of *personal identity*.

Personal identity distinguishes each of us from the rest of the human race, and is the framework within which we are individually able to discover a sense of purpose and meaning. If we had no personal identity, there would be no me, and whatever I was or did would have little or no meaning for there would be no me to take responsibility for it. Personal identity is a priceless gift, but we could not have it if we lacked personal uniqueness. Apart from uniqueness, our identity could only be corporate at best, for we would blend and disappear into a crowd of clones. Thankfully we all *do* possess unique qualities that make our identities personal.

Personal identity depends upon much more than uniqueness, however. To

help us understand this, join me in a little thought experiment. Imagine for a moment that you are the only person in the universe. There is no one else, no



God, no angels, no human beings. Now try to answer the question, “Who am I?” In a truly empty universe the question is unanswerable; it doesn’t even have meaning. In an empty universe you would have no identity even though *all* your qualities would be unique. Whatever wonderful traits you might possess would not matter at all, for there would be no one to be aware of them or to care about them one way or the other.

So let’s add one more person to our imaginary universe, another person, human and mortal like you. Now who are you? Assuming you are in proximity with that other person, you can now have an identity, and assuming you are not clones who look and think exactly alike, your identity can be personal. Depending upon your genders, you may become the other person’s spouse, or you may remain just friends. You may become his master and he your slave, or vice versa. You can compare yourselves and discover that you are the studious one and she the athletic one, and so on. Any one of these relationships can answer your question, “Who am I?” You can now say, “I am that

person’s best friend,” or whatever. The point is that identity depends upon relationship, even more than upon uniqueness. Without uniqueness our identity cannot be personal, but without relationship we can have no identity at all.

There’s still a glitch in our imaginary universe, however. Remember that the two people in it are *mortal*. Let’s imagine the other person dies first, and you’re left alone once more. Now who are you? You’re back to being no one of significance. You had an identity while your companion lived, but now that temporary identity has evaporated. Even the memory of that identity is meaningless, for once again there is no one to care whether you were the master or the slave, the spouse or the friend. Our experiment helps us realize that meaningful identity depends upon *lasting* relationship. Personal identity depends upon uniqueness, but any meaningful identity at all depends upon relationship that perdures, i.e., *that lasts forever*. No wonder identity crises plague secular man: having disavowed the possibility of life after death—and with it the possibility of perduring relationships—he cannot find any meaningful answer to the question, “Who am I?” This is precisely what makes the white stone the most precious gem mentioned in Revelation. The white stone represents our personal identity that is based securely upon an eternal relationship!

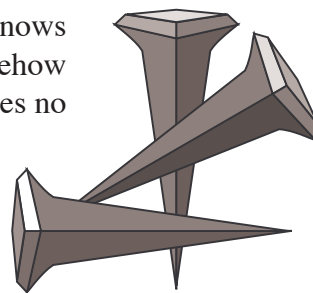
Of course, relationship as such may not excite us. After all, there are good relationships and bad ones. We’d gladly trade away our identity for a bowl of lentils if that identity were based on an eternal relationship that was abusive—or even just boring. The overcomer need not fear, however,

for the eternal relationship we have entered into is the very one which has inspired all our fondest fairy tales, only this relationship is real. It is the relationship that provides that additional identity with which the now royal overcomer emerges from the King's banquet. It is a relationship with the White Stone Himself.

Stone of Intimacy

You see, along with all its other meanings, the white stone symbolizes its giver, the Lord Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth is "the living Stone —rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— For in Scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame'" (1 Pet. 2.4-7). Jesus is the rock that was cleft to hide His beloved (Song of Solomon 2.14). He was broken open that the living water might spring forth, for the Israelites "drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10.4). He is the rock upon which people build their houses securely (Mat. 7.24). He is the stone with "seven eyes" that removes sin in a single day (Zech. 3.9). He is "the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands," who reduces the kingdoms of this world to dust and replaces them with His kingdom which will never end (Dan. 2.45). He is the uncreated Stone which the unbelieving Jews presumptuously thought to pelt with pebbles He Himself had created (John 10.31,32). Jesus is "the Rock eternal" (Isaiah 26.4).

But wait! The white stone of Revelation has our name written upon it; does Jesus have our names written upon Him? I believe He does. When heaven stood open, John saw Christ on a white horse (Rev. 19.11,12). Christ's eyes, John said, "are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. *He has a name written on him* that no one knows but he himself." I imagine that name written upon Jesus to refer somehow to the corporate multitude that He purchased with His blood. Why does no one else know that name? Probably because no one else *can* know it. Only Jesus Himself can comprehend the price by which he earned the right to bear that name, the name of the redeemed, tattooed upon His shoulders by a Roman lash. We realize that as a mariner might endure the tattooer's needle to engrave the name of his bride over his heart, Christ endured the Roman nails to engrave our names upon Himself, for we are the object of His eternal affection.



By giving us the engraved white stone then, Jesus symbolically gives Himself to us. He gives Himself to us wholly, and as an eternal possession, In other words, Jesus gives Himself to us as our bridegroom. Christ has not only purchased our acquittal and admittance into the banquet, but has also given us meaningful identity as His co-regents, and even more importantly *as His bride*. Our identity as kings signifies purpose, but our identity as His bride signifies intimacy, and intimacy is the very deepest longing of our hearts, that longing to be truly known and yet wholly loved. The white stone is a promise that the intimacy we long for, intimacy with a Lover Who is Faithful and True, will be granted to us as we hold fast our faith and thereby overcome the world.



Birth Pains

Where are we on the eschatological calendar?

The Coming Birth

The onset of labor pains is a common simile in Bible prophecy about the end time, the time of Christ's coming. The Old Testament prophets use this figure of speech, as did Paul (1 Thes. 5.1-4) and even our Lord Jesus (Mat. 24.8). When one begins to notice how often the theme of labor pains arises in end-time passages, one naturally wonders who or what is going to be born?

Interestingly enough, the Bible predicts the birth of apocalyptic triplets. The prophet Isaiah predicted all three of them, the last of which is a *country* that will "be born in a day" (Isaiah 66.6 and following). Zechariah clarifies for us that the nation of Israel will be "re-born" when the Israelites see Christ, "the one they have pierced." This will occur when Jesus comes to destroy the enemies of Jerusalem (Zech. 12.9-13.1). Isaiah also predicted that "the Earth will give birth to her dead" (Isaiah 26.19). In other words, the second of the triplets to be brought forth at the end of the age is *the whole body of God's people who have died*. The earth, like a giant womb will give up her dead in a great resurrection. Isaiah also described the first of the triplets in a prophecy against ancient Babylon that looks forward to the future apocalypse. He predicted the birth of *a day*, that is, *the apocalyptic day of the Lord*, in parturition-like anguish (Isaiah 13.6-13). As Paul wrote, "we know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Rom. 8.22). When the contractions become intense and the hard labor has run its course, the world will witness the spiritual birth of a nation, the resurrection of the righteous and the dawn of the Day of the Lord.

The Beginning of Birth Pains

When the disciples of Jesus asked Him, "what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus told them the very earliest signs of the coming apocalypse. Jesus referred to those early signs as "the beginning of birth pains," that is, the very first stirrings of the cosmos revealing the progress of the eschatological pregnancy.

Bible readers are quite familiar with the list of those beginning birth pains. Jesus said that we would hear of "wars and rumors of wars" (Mat. 24.6), and that there would be "plagues and famines in various places" (Luke 21.11). Jesus also predicted that there would be "great earthquakes" as well as "terrors and great signs from heaven" (Luke 21.11). These predictions are well known, even among the secular media, but unfortunately these signs have been misinterpreted even by popular Bible teachers.



What Do The First Birth Pains Mean?

Do The First Birth Pains Signify That Christ's Coming Is Imminent

Last week I watched yet another TV preacher tell me that major earthquakes are increasing in frequency and therefore Christ will return *immediately*. He like so many others have missed the point of this group of signs, and yet Jesus made his meaning very clear. In Luke 21.9 Jesus said, “do not be frightened. These things must happen first, *but the end will not come right away.*” The whole reason Jesus mentioned this group of signs was so that his apocalyptically eager disciples would not interpret the first earthquake or war that came along as the sign that the end was upon them. Jesus said in Mat. 24.8, “...all these things are merely *the beginning* of birth pangs.” As every mom knows (and now most dads), there are stages of labor and childbirth. The very first twinges of the uterus, called Braxton Hicks’ contractions, have nothing to do directly with the eventual birth but only help the uterus grow during the course of the pregnancy. Nevertheless, they are sometimes mistaken for the beginning of actual labor pains. Even when the first real labor contractions begin in prodromal labor, it’s too early to go to the hospital. Many of us remember the anxious days before the birth of our first child when we were ready to rush to the hospital because of those very first labor pains. Our obstetrician had to calm us down, telling us not to come to the hospital until the contractions were 5 minutes apart. That’s exactly what Jesus was telling his disciples about wars and earthquakes: Don’t expect my coming to accompany these beginning signs, but wait a little bit longer.



Don't Celestial Phenomena Signal the End?

But wait! Jesus mentioned “terrors and great signs from Heaven” (Luke 21.11). Don’t those phenomena pertain to the very end of the age? Yes, the book of Revelation makes clear that celestial upheavals will accompany the Second Coming proper, but those are not what Jesus was talking about when he listed “the beginning of birth pangs.” When Jesus listed “signs from Heaven” among the first birth pangs, He was reiterating the warning that came centuries before through the prophet Jeremiah:

Thus says the LORD,
Do not learn the way of the nations,
And do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens
Although the nations are terrified by them... (Jer. 10.2)

As C. F. Keil writes in his *Commentary On The Old Testament*, these signs of the heaven mentioned in Jeremiah “are unwonted phenomena in the heavens, eclipses of the sun and moon, comets, and unusual conjunctions of the stars, which were regarded as the precursors of extraordinary and disastrous events.” The warnings of Jesus and Jeremiah are the same: don’t let these “celestial omens” frighten you as though an apocalyptic event were about to happen. (Remember the excitement about

The Jupiter Effect, the super alignment of the planets in 1982?)

Ironically, I'm writing the first part of this article on August 11, 1999, the day of the full eclipse of the sun over parts of Europe and Asia. For the last week I've read news reports about the superstitious fears connected with this eclipse. People of various cultures have become alarmed about it, even in countries where the phenomenon would not be visible. In Mexico where the moon would not block the sun at all, people nevertheless got it into their heads that they needed to rush to have candles and matches blessed by a priest before the onset of the eclipse. Five Albanian families took shelter in a communist-era bunker, fearing that today's solar eclipse would mark the start of an apocalypse. "There must be some truth in all this talk about a major catastrophe," a 38-year-old member of one of the families explained. In France where the full eclipse was visible, fashion designer Paco Rabanne had written a book predicting that the Russian space station Mir would tumble into Paris and destroy the city today. (He based his forecast on the writings of the 16th century seer Nostradamus.) I just received e-mail from Bridges for Peace worker, Ron Cantrell, describing the scene today in Jerusalem:

The solar eclipse sent the Moslem world scurrying for shelter. The Old City was almost deserted in those sections. The East Jerusalem bus station was like a ghost town. I have never seen that in all the 12 years I have lived here. There was an earthquake in the Med Sea which was felt in northern Israel and also one in Iran as I understand. That only helped scare the b'jeebers out of that sector of our population. We live in an area of the world where superstition is very real.

It's precisely such superstitious fears that Christ meant to allay by his remarks about the "beginning of birth pangs." "These things must happen first, *but the end will not come right away.*"

But I've Read That "Killer" Earthquakes Have Increased Dramatically Over the Last Decades!

As though attempting to prove that the end *will come right away*, popular prophecy teachers have been feeding us sensational earthquake statistics. Author Grant R. Jeffrey, "recognized as a leading researcher and Bible Prophecy teacher," writes in his book *The Signature of God*, on page 186:

Major "killer" quakes (7.2 or greater on the Richter Scale) occurred only once per decade throughout history until our century. However, since A.D. 1900, the growth in major earthquakes has been relentless. From 1900 to 1949 it averaged three major quakes per decade. From 1949 the increase became awesome with 9 killer quakes in the 1950s; 13 in the 1960s; 56 in the 1970s and an amazing 74 major quakes in the 1980s. Finally, in the 1990s, at the present rate, we will experience 125 major killer quakes in this decade (Source: *U. S. Geological Survey Earthquake Report*, Boulder, Colorado).

These are impressive numbers. The only problem is that they are not true, in spite of the attribution to the U. S. Geological Survey. Anyone who cares to verify this contention can do so by logging on to the National Geophysical Data Center earthquake database at:

www.ngdc.noaa.gov:80/seg/hazard/sig_srch.shtml

I've searched this outstanding database by all kinds of different criteria and here's what I've found:

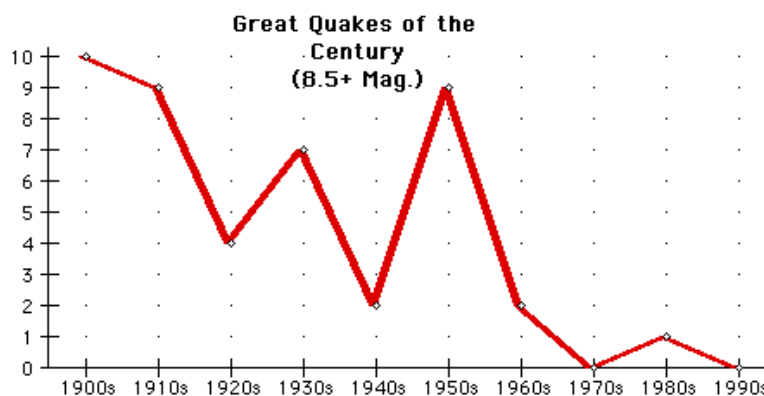
(A) Jeffrey implies that the killer quakes he's writing about are defined simply by a 7.2 or greater magnitude. A quick check of the on-line database reveals that there were 205 quakes of 7.2 magnitude or greater in the first decade *alone* of the 20th century, and that frequency has been on a

downward trend such that there were 122 in the 1970s, 58 in the 1980s and a projected 57 in the decade of the 1990s.

(B) Since Jeffrey emphasizes the “killer” aspect of his quakes, I checked the database for quakes that caused fatalities of 500 or more. By that criteria, only the number of quakes for the 1970s matches Jeffrey’s statistics with 56 such quakes. Furthermore, the trend since then has been downward with only 21 “killer” quakes in the 1980s and a projected 18 for the 1990s.

(C) There was only one way I could get the National Geophysical Data Center’s database to show an *upward* trend, and that was to check for quakes of 8.5 magnitude or greater over the last three *centuries*. When we look at that bigger picture we find 7 great quakes in the 1700s, 22 great quakes in the 1800s and 44 great quakes in the 20th century.

What’s the point? First of all that there is no evidence of a dramatic increase of “killer” earthquake activity in the short term. Secondly, we must take sensational statistics with a grain of salt until we can verify them for ourselves from a reliable source. There’s one more important thing that we should note about the “birth pain” of “great earthquakes” however: Jesus never said anything about great earthquakes *increasing in frequency*. Jesus only said that *there would be* great earthquakes. His point was not that earthquakes would increase in frequency to alert us to his impending coming, but on the contrary, that when great earthquakes happen we *should not* take them as a sign of an immediate apocalypse. Popular prophecy teachers are manipulating earthquake data to suggest the opposite of what Jesus intended.



When Does the Active Labor Begin?

While neither “the beginnings of birth pangs,” or even the “Phase 1” prodromal labor signify the *immediate* onset of the birth, they do signify its nearing approach. We may well ask then, when the “Phase 2” or active labor will begin. Jesus did not leave His disciples in the dark about this, but taught clearly about what would follow the preliminary birth pains.

Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by **all** nations on account of My name. And at that time **many** will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And **many** false prophets will arise, and will mislead **many**. And because lawlessness is increased, **most** people’s love will grow cold.... And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the **whole** world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. (Mat. 24.9-14)

We see from the words I’ve emphasized in this passage that just as contractions intensify with the onset of active labor, there will be an intensification of certain phenomena to indicate the beginning of the End Time. These phenomena that intensify will not be earthquakes and celestial signs, however, but rather spiritual upheavals in society. The persecution of Christians will intensify (verse

9) with an accompanying apostasy or “falling away” from the faith (v.10). False prophets will pop up like toadstools (v.11) and the general trend of society will be to cast off moral restraints (v. 12), while Christians make a final and valiant evangelistic push, proclaiming globally that Jesus is King.

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse (Revelation 6.1-8) confirm that the onset of the active labor will take the form of intensifying sociopolitical crises with a spiritual dimension. These horsemen are malignant spirits, given authority for a time to agitate the peoples and nations of the earth. The first horseman will ride out to conquer, stimulating a fresh round of imperialistic military invasions. The second rider will gallop out with a huge sword to take peace from the earth, inciting wars both international and internecine. The third horseman will bring the economic chaos that naturally follows wars and revolutions, and the fourth horseman will bring the murder, famine, plague and predators that follow from a major breakdown of society’s infrastructures. When these social upheavals intensify to the point where they seem to be galloping in like horses, we’ll know that the “Phase 3” *hard* labor is about to begin.



What Will Induce The Hard Labor?

Many women experiencing childbirth for the first time have reached a point in their labor when for them it became “a time of unprecedented distress.” This is how Jesus described the final intensification of sociopolitical upheavals that will give birth to the Day of the Lord. He said there will come a time of “great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equalled again” (Mat. 24.21). There will be no ambiguity about the onset of this apocalyptic hard labor, for Jesus identified the event that would induce the final anguishing contractions. He reaffirmed Daniel’s ancient prophecy about the setting up of “the Abomination of Desolation” (Mat. 24.15) and declared that the witnesses to that event should flee the distress that would immediately ensue. Other passages, including Daniel 11.31 and 2 Thessalonians 2.1-12, clarify that this Abomination of

Desolation will be a destructive image (compare Rev. 13.11-15), set up to desecrate the Jerusalem temple. This desecration will occur by the authority of an individual known as “the man of lawlessness” or the Antichrist, who will suspend the regular temple sacrifices and finally set himself up as God in the temple. When these events occur, believers will know that the apocalyptic Day of the Lord is about to be born.

How Far Apart Are Our Contractions?

Obviously, our world has been experiencing the “beginning of birth pains” for the last 2,000 years. Persecutions, earthquakes and the rest of those signs have occurred in varying intensities throughout the Christian era. However, the Lord’s prediction of the increase of lawlessness suggests that we are very near the onset of Phase 2, the apocalyptic “active labor.” The word *lawlessness* that Jesus used in his prediction of Matthew 24.12 can be generically translated *wickedness*, but its underlying sense of *despising law* exactly describes the present trend in our postmodern world. Nero’s Rome may have practiced equal debauchery to that in our sin capitals today, but in Nero’s day people practiced

perversion against their personal and societal consciences. With the exception of the occasional real atheist, when people did wrong in earlier centuries they nevertheless believed there was an objective right and wrong. Today society is teaching us that reality is only a social construct and that the individual person is the source of his or her own truth: there is no such thing as objective, antithetical truth, and therefore thinking in terms of right and wrong is laughable, or worse, it's just plain bigoted and intolerant. The secular world is racing to throw off societal restraint; the idea of submitting to divine restraint is becoming a joke.

Please understand that I'm talking about a philosophy and world view, not the crime rate. Crime rates go up and down, but the philosophy that promotes moral independence will become ever more pervasive until it culminates in the apocalyptic battle of Psalm 2, when the rulers of the world attempt to defeat God Himself and His Messiah, saying, "Let us break their chains, and throw off their fetters." The trend toward such open resistance to God's rule began with the French Revolution in the 1790's with the formation of the very first secular state, that is, the first country to attempt to govern without a national god or national religion (other than Reason). The secularist trend has been energized since 1860 by Darwin's theory of a godless human origin. Now, two hundred years after the French Revolution, secular atheism has worked its way through the soul of our world like yeast and the principle of lawlessness is rising.


This inbred lawlessness of our time might not be so problematic were it not for our accelerating population pressures. As the nations of the world now struggle to support six billion persons, our natural and nationalistic selfishness cannot help but emerge. Please do not misunderstand me on this point. I do not in any way favor programs of population control. I believe we have a sin problem, not a population problem. Nevertheless, let me say that the trend of plunging morality crossed with the trend of skyrocketing population provides the volatile environment in which the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are likely to gallop forth and begin their careers of social mayhem. When that happens, the "beginning of birth pains" in our world will turn into active labor, and we will know that the Lord is at the door (Mat. 24.33).

Haven't People Always Said Christ Was Returning Soon?

There have been countless false alarms regarding Christ's coming in church history. These should not tempt us to complacency, however, because certain conditions relating to Christ's coming exist in our generation that have *never* existed before. The most important of these is the reestablishment of Israel in her land. This is crucial because all of the major prophecies¹ about Christ's second coming, including those made by Jesus Himself, envision a national presence of the Israelites in the land and in Jerusalem at the end of the age. Such a national Israeli presence, required by the apocalyptic prophecies, did not exist after the dispersion of the Jews under the Romans in the first and second centuries—until 1948. Therefore, in order to predict the imminent end of the age before our generation, misguided prophets through the centuries, however well-meaning, had to ignore or allegorize various eschatological passages. Since the reestablishment of national Israel in 1948, however, it has for the first time become biblically plausible to imagine Christ's return within a generation. Anyone living in the world since May of 1948 can say, "Christ *may* return in my lifetime."

Conclusion

So where are we on the eschatological calendar? We're not in the End Time yet, for we're only experiencing "the beginning of birth pains." However, we have a tremendous problem today with pervasive moral lawlessness that is apt to result soon in the sociopolitical upheavals of the End Time. I think we're experiencing prodromal birth pains, prodromal meaning that these current pains are the early warning of intensified contractions that are about to begin.

What if anything should we do about it? Well, it was very instructive for me to recently attend the funeral of a dear Christian man who died after a valiant two-year struggle against a rare disease. On the one hand, it was tragic that he died so young. On the other hand it was a huge blessing that he did not die suddenly, but was able to anticipate his possible parting for a good while. He made excellent use of that in-between time to take care of eternal priorities, and by the time his life ended it had resulted in a powerful spiritual testimony to an auditorium packed with people. The Lord has given us a similar early warning of the approaching end of the age. Jesus told us what we should do about in the words of John 9.4: "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work." If we are ever going to do anything for God, if we are ever going to seek first His kingdom, if we are ever going to take up our part in the work of making disciples from every nation, the time we must do it is now. 



Cults Boom As New Millennium Looms

.c The Associated Press
By CHARLES HUTZLER

WHITE CLOUD MOUNTAIN, China (AP) - The farmer wearing a crisp blue Mao suit and a lifetime of cares on his creased face throws himself at the black-swaddled legs of a gray-bearded Taoist priest. Nearby, childless couples seek prayers and potions for fertility.

By the thousands every day for eight days, they come. Poor laborers, businessmen with mobile phones, even a reputed local crime lord wearing a gold bracelet - the unfortunate and the fortune-seeking - climb the 700 stone steps up arid White Cloud Mountain for solace.

A religious resurgence is sweeping China, filling the spiritual void as capitalist reforms discredit communist ideology. With it, at millennium's end, have come apocalyptic overtones. Books foretelling doom sell rapidly. Rumors circulate of weird rituals involving the dead.

For China's leaders, the millennium has heightened their worries about popular rejection amid rising unemployment, falling incomes and a year of politically sensitive milestones. Never comfortable with religion, the officially atheistic party is clamping down on superstitious ways and fringe groups, most notably with Thursday's outright ban

on the popular meditation-exercise sect Falun Gong.

The arrival of 1999 already had made security forces anxious over Tibetan separatism on the 40th anniversary of an anti-Chinese uprising and renewed dissident activity for the 10th anniversary of the crushing of the Tiananmen Square democracy movement. Next comes the 50th anniversary of communist rule on Oct. 1.

“On top of that, we’ve got the end of the millennium to deal with,” said one Communist Party official involved in security work, who agreed to discuss the issue if not quoted by name.

Those anxieties crystallized in late April, when as many as 30,000 members of Falun Gong surrounded party headquarters in a daylong silent protest - the largest challenge to the leadership in a decade. Protesters even scolded the premier that their New Age blend of beliefs, and not communism, could solve China’s spiritual crisis.

After a three-month campaign to infiltrate Falun Gong, discredit its teachings and arrest its leading members drew angry protests in 30 cities, the government banned the group last week, accusing it of “spreading superstitious, evil thinking to blind the people, to stir up trouble.”

The condemnation was the boldest in an intensifying cycle of statements meant to discredit superstition and glorify the “scientific” socialist policies that have raised living standards for hundreds of millions.

“In recent years, ignorant and superstitious activities have gained ground,” the People’s Daily, the authoritative party newspaper, warned in June. “These activities have negatively affected our work and undertakings by varying degrees.”

“Party members are worshipping Buddhas, practicing astrology, divination, geomancy and physiognomy,” the newspaper complained.

Those practices, and more, were in evidence at White Cloud Mountain for what locals call northwestern China’s biggest Taoist festival, an eight-day celebration of the great protector spirit, Zhen Wu.

The spare precincts of the 400-year-old temple above the Yellow River, in the barren, over-farmed terraced hills of Shaanxi province, drew worshippers from as far as central China’s rice basket 550 miles to the south.

Beggars of all stripes - a legless dwarf, farmers ruined by drought - jammed the hillside with hawkers of dubious tonics and shiny amulets, some bearing the likeness of revolutionary leader Mao Tse-tung. Dozens of uniformed and plainclothes police kept watch, a few of whom occasionally stopped to pray.

Itinerant Taoist priests, for a price, told fortunes by examining bumps on heads or lines on hands or feet. Temple priests cast divination sticks. One scratched plaster from the statue of a fertility spirit and mixed the shavings with ashes from burned incense, a powder then given to those seeking children, especially boys.

“People just want equilibrium. They want a life without misfortune and sickness,” said the Rev. Liu, one of White Cloud Mountain’s 20-odd resident Taoist priests.

Despite 2,000 years of empire, China has never experienced a millennium in the Western sense. It didn’t adopt the Gregorian calendar until this century. But the emperors ruthlessly suppressed end-of-the-world cults and rebellious secret societies as dangers to their rule.

Mao continued the tradition after the communists won power - and extended it to all religion. In the reform era of the past two decades, the government has eased up, but limits religious practice to Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism and Taoism, often described as China’s only indigenous religion.

Taoism, however, has always occupied tenuous territory, serving as a grab-bag for rich, local folk religions. Its deities have often been adopted by cults, whose appeal remains strong in the poor countryside.

Over the past half year or so, Chinese authorities have shut down several cults, arresting their leaders. One group, the Master God Sect, had by official count 10,000 members spread over 22 provinces. Its leader was sentenced to death in June.

Lurid crimes of superstition have cropped up in the state media. An aluminum factory worker reportedly dug up more than 100 graves after being told in a dream that handling bones would cure his chronic heart palpitations. Farmers in one poor county purportedly took to buying fresh female corpses to fulfill an old remedy for warding off evil spirits.

Further signs of millennial fascination come from the book shelves. Highbrow stores carry a 10-volume series on calamities, from mine collapses to disaster economics. Executives and ordinary workers alike are reading translations of Nostradamus, the 16th century French astrologer whose writings many think foretell doom in 1999.

“Every one’s reading it. I’ve read it myself,” said Zhang Wei, operator of a book stall in Beijing’s university district. “I don’t dare believe it and I don’t dare not.”

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Slavery's New Face

NEWSWEEK Dec. 18, 2000 — Christi Elangwe must have dazzled the human-resources department at Kmart with her brilliant smile and invincible humor—they hired her on the spot, and she started work just before Thanksgiving.

“I’m the greeter,” the 23-year-old says enthusiastically over popcorn shrimp at a Shoney’s restaurant near Washington, D.C. She has opened her first bank account and is finally saving for college. Pride is evident in the staccato of her Cameroonian accent: “It’s my first job.” “It’s your first job for which you’re paid,” corrects her lawyer, Steve Smitson, who is sitting across from her.

That reminder snapped Elangwe back to a time, less than a year ago, when she says she was enduring unspeakable cruelty in one of America’s wealthiest suburbs. Inside a \$284,000 Germantown town house, 20 miles from the White House, Elangwe was, literally, a slave, according to court papers filed Nov. 29. For most of her five years there, she was forbidden from using the telephone, prevented from venturing into the front yard without an escort and prohibited from talking to anybody who might have crossed her path, even on family outings to church. She was kept so tightly under wraps, few of her neighbors knew she existed.

**Experts estimate that 1 million undocumented immigrants
are currently trapped here in slavlike conditions.**

Inside the house, she says, her chores began at 6:30 a.m. and ended only once Daniel Achamorfaw, his wife, Vivian Satia, and their three children were in bed; she worked 16 hours a day, seven days a week, for almost 1,800 days on end. If she had been earning minimum wage, well below the going rate for live-in nannies, her accumulated salary might have reached \$175,000, says her attorney. But she was never paid.

1 MILLION SLAVES

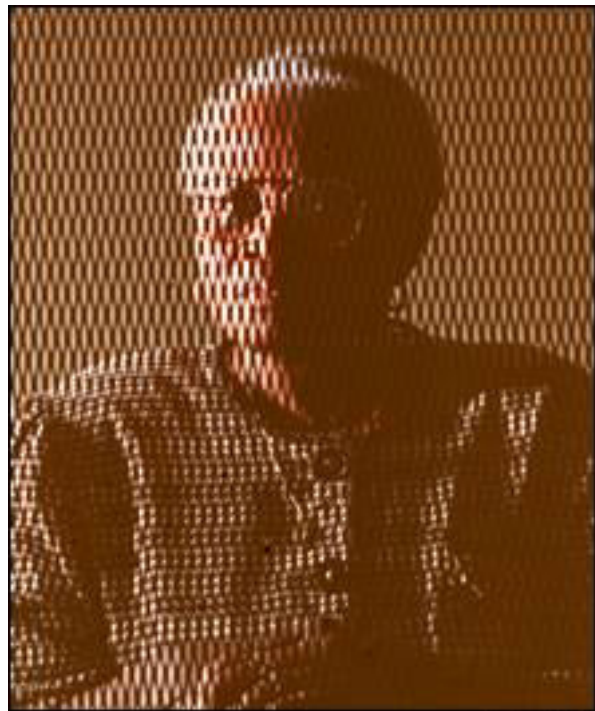
Slavery is alive in America again. Today’s slaves may not be bought, sold or tortured in the public square, like those in “Roots” or “Amistad,” but experts with the Protection Project, an anti-trafficking program at Johns Hopkins University, estimate that 1 million undocumented immigrants are currently trapped here in slavlike conditions. (By way of comparison, perhaps 6 million Africans were shipped here between 1502 and 1808, when Congress outlawed the Atlantic slave trade.) “These are huge numbers, given the fact that people don’t think this is going on,” Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told NBC News earlier this year. The victims are mostly women who have been tricked into bondage, ironically often by people who immigrated here from their own homelands. Most female Asian slaves are forced into prostitution rings, serving metropolitan areas with large Asian communities, says Dr. Laura J. Lederer, who directs the Protection Project and has interviewed 50 trafficking victims. Most Latin American slaves are required to work in the fields, while those from the Middle East or Africa are, like Christi Elangwe, trapped as domestic workers in affluent homes. Whatever lot they draw, they all share the two defining traits of slavery through the ages: they are not paid and they cannot leave.

“It’s the fastest-growing criminal enterprise,
behind guns and drugs, in this country.”
— THERESA LOAR director, Inter-Agency Council on Women

President Bill Clinton’s five-year-old Inter-Agency Council on Women puts the value of the global slave trade at some \$9 billion. “It’s incredibly lucrative,” says council director Theresa Loar. “It’s the fastest-growing criminal enterprise, behind guns and drugs, in this country.” The situation is so serious that in October, the U.N. Crime Commission met in Vienna to draft an international treaty to combat human trafficking worldwide. The treaty contains the first international definition of “trafficking in persons,” recognizing that psychological coercion—and not just the use of force—is now one of the main tools of traffickers. The United States followed suit: on Oct. 28, Clinton signed a bill that gives temporary asylum to the slaves and makes life in prison a possible penalty for the enslavers. “Every year... women, children and men are forced or tricked into lives of utter misery,” Clinton said in his weekly radio address later that morning. “This is slavery, plain and simple.”

A RASH OF CASES

In just the past few months, a rash of slavery cases have reached the U.S. courts. In October, the Justice Department indicted one of Berkeley, Calif.’s largest landowners, Lakireddy Bali Reddy (and other family members, all of whom have pleaded not guilty), on charges he lured a dozen women from India with the promise of jobs but had “immoral” sexual relations with them and had them work, unpaid, as maids in his many buildings instead. Texas prosecutors got guilty pleas last August in a case where 100 Chinese and Thai women were agreeing to pay \$40,000 a piece to sneak into America every month, only to find themselves pressed into the flesh trade in Houston. A few days later, Rene R. Bonetti—a satellite engineer from Gaithersburg, Md.—was sentenced to 6 years for trapping a Brazilian maid in his home, with no pay and insufficient food, for 20 years. **Hilda Rosa Dos Santos** (photo) testified that Bonetti’s wife, Margarida Bonetti, burned and beat her, and that Mr. Bonetti padlocked the refrigerator. By the time neighbors realized Dos Santos was in jeopardy, she had a festering gash on one leg and an untreated tumor in her stomach the size of a soccer ball. Mrs. Bonetti fled the United States to her native Brazil after she was indicted on charges of abuse. Mr. Bonetti has appealed.



Ethan Hill

Santos (photo) testified that Bonetti’s wife, Margarida Bonetti, burned and beat her, and that Mr. Bonetti padlocked the refrigerator. By the time neighbors realized Dos Santos was in jeopardy, she had a festering gash on one leg and an untreated tumor in her stomach the size of a soccer ball. Mrs. Bonetti fled the United States to her native Brazil after she was indicted on charges of abuse. Mr. Bonetti has appealed.

The most-high-profile case will reach a federal jury next month, when Little Rock, Ark., businessman David Jewell Jones—an appointee of the then Governor Clinton’s and a friend of former senator David Pryor’s—is scheduled to stand trial on charges that he twice deputized confederates to go to Guangdong province on the South China Sea, propose marriage to a woman and deliver her to him upon their return, “for the purpose of maintaining a sexual relationship,” according to

the Justice Department. The women, Yu Ho Zhong, now 35, and Xiao Ying Wu, 38, ultimately went to U.S. officials with their stories, which Jones's attorney calls "garbage." An earlier trial resulted in a hung jury.

Christi Elangwe descended into slavery by stages, beginning in 1993, when she was a sixth grader in Cameroon who wished to attend high school and one day become a nurse. Her parents had little money, however, and could not pay for school. So she did what so many other ambitious young women from her country do. In exchange for tuition, she became a live-in maid for an older woman in a distant village. She was disappointed when her employer enrolled her in a home-economics trade program, instead of regular school. Too timid to object, Elangwe stayed put anyway until she was 17, when her employer proposed a new arrangement. "She told me she has a daughter in America, and she needs somebody to come and check out with the kids, and she will send the person to school," says Elangwe in her irregular English. "That's what I really wanted to do, I wanted to go to school." But school was apparently never a real possibility. Lynne A. Battaglia, the U.S. attorney in Maryland, contends that Daniel Acha-Morfaw, a computer consultant, and his wife, Vivian Satia, a nurse (both are U.S. citizens who had emigrated from Cameroon themselves), were looking for unpaid labor to help raise their three kids, and broke laws to get it. Less than two weeks ago they were arrested and charged with harboring an alien and forcing her to work without pay. Two other families were also arrested, part of a three-year-long joint investigation by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of State. "These are particularly sad cases," Battaglia says. Both Acha-Morfaw and Satia plan vigorous defenses against the charges, which carry 15-year prison terms and \$500,000 fines, their lawyers say.

A CLEAR MISTAKE

Elangwe left Cameroon for the first time in her life in February 1995, on a flight through Paris to America. She passed through Customs smoothly, she says, fraudulently using a passport her new employers had mailed her; it belonged to a U.S. resident who barely resembled her, say her attorneys. "I was so excited," she says. But it was immediately clear she had made a mistake. Elangwe is quick to point out that her five years of tending to the couple and their children (now ages 12, 10 and 7) were not as hideous as they might have been. She slept on a mattress in a bedroom—alongside the youngest daughter, whom she cared for day and night. She had plenty to eat. She was never beaten. But she was in no way free. She was kept inside the town house almost continually. Often she took care of children of the couple's friends and relatives, sometimes so many that the home resembled a day-care facility. She was never allowed to visit a physician or a dentist. Occasionally, she begged to be taken to the mall, and reluctantly, they dropped her off there for brief, lonely strolls through its bright corridors. This happened three times—in five years. Neither Acha-Morfaw nor his wife would talk to NEWSWEEK, and their lawyers declined to comment on specific charges, except to deny any involvement in slavery. "It's certainly nothing more sinister than" harboring an alien, says Steven D. Kupferberg, Satia's lawyer. "This girl spoke English? She could have told somebody!" Elangwe says she held tight to the hope that the pair would eventually loosen their grip on her. "They would say, 'You've only been here for four years, you've only been here for five years. Five years is not enough for you to start going out or working or going to school'." Sometimes they told her they had sent money back home to her family as payments for her labors. But this was not true, say her attorneys, who have investigated the claim. Nobody kept a gun to Elangwe's head. Instead of using shackles, Elangwe's alleged captors kept her locked up through fear. This is not unusual, as Cherif Bassiouni, who heads the International Human Rights Law Institute at DePaul University,

says: “The weakest and most vulnerable can be too scared to leave.” “I believed America is no good,” Elangwe says. “[Vivian Satia] said I shouldn’t think America is easy. It’s not everybody can make it in America. It’s dangerous out there. You can get killed. You could go out there and get killed.” Steadily, the idea that she had any role in the larger world vanished entirely.

A POST-COLD-WAR BURDEN

Because women in less-developed countries have suffered the bulk of the burdens of post-cold-war economic disparities, they make up the overwhelming majority of the world’s slaves. In rural areas of Thailand, a world hub in the slave trade, many girls resign themselves from a young age to work in the brothels that prop up large segments of the country’s economy. The situation is similar in parts of Latin America and Africa. In the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, where as many as two thirds of the women live in poverty, even the most spurious promises of American dreams hold a powerful allure. Poor women there are easily taken by traffickers with offers of phantom jobs as dancers, models or waitresses in America—and then pressed into slavery as prostitutes or domestics. So desperate are they for opportunities in Bulgaria, one in four women between the ages of 12 and 35 says she is likely to take a risky foreign job she sees advertised in local papers, according to a recent survey by the International Organization for Migration. These pressures were behind an enormous Atlanta-based prostitution ring for which eight suspected Vietnamese and Chinese mob members were indicted in 1999 and are now serving federal sentences. They smuggled in nearly 1,000 women as young as 13 from China, South Korea, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia, and farmed them out into brothels in 16 states. All had agreed to repay their travel costs of \$30,000 to \$40,000, says Assistant U.S. Attorney Janis Gordon, and when they arrived here, prostitution was the only means offered. Their armed captors kept a ledger showing how much each woman owed and how much each was credited after every trick. A copy obtained by NEWSWEEK shows that customers were charged \$100 per encounter, \$30 of which went to the house. The remainder went to the traffickers. Some women were hired out more than 20 times a day. Most could not keep pace. One woman is known to have earned her freedom over the course of the syndicate’s operation, from 1995 to 1998. It took her 11 months. She gave herself the nickname Lucky.

“Here’s what he said to me: He has my life,
he can do as he please with it”
— PB held captive in Michigan

The INS has identified 250 brothels in 26 states suspected of using unwitting immigrant women as prostitutes. But there are no similar statistics for women who are unpaid nannies in private homes, some held out of view under no more felicitous circumstances. An intensely upbeat teenager who goes by her initials, “PB”—her true identity is guarded at the request of a Michigan judge—turned 18 a few weeks ago and celebrated with an ice-skating party for a dozen friends. It was her first birthday celebration since arriving in Farmington Hills, an upper-middle-class Detroit suburb, where she lived for four years in a concrete basement. “That’s why I chose kind of a kiddie thing, like ice skating,” she says brightly, “because I didn’t have my teenage years.”

‘IT SEEMED LIKE A NORMAL HOME’

Like Christi Elangwe, PB came to America from Cameroon with promises of an education in exchange for domestic services. What transpired was quite different. For one thing, one of her lawyers, Ronald E. Kaplovitz, suspects that PB’s father—who barter his labor for food back home—may have sold his daughter for cash. Once she arrived in America, she was virtually locked inside and hidden from sight. “We’re a Neighborhood Watch community,” says Susan Aschoff, who lives next door to the stately two-story, \$260,000 home that was PB’s dungeon, “but we’re looking for strangers, not for people who are living here, not somebody living next door.” She describes Joseph Djoumessi, a 43-year-old Wayne State University law-school graduate, and his wife, Evelyn, 35, a pharmacist—both had emigrated from Cameroon—as ordinary neighbors. “It seemed like a normal home,” she says. But Oakland County prosecutors had the pair arrested last July on charges of kidnapping and child abuse. Joseph Djoumessi is further charged with first-degree sexual assault for raping and sodomizing PB over several years, beginning one night in 1998, when he beckoned the minor into his bedroom to watch television. “The wife was at work,” PB tells NEWSWEEK in a steady, thin voice. “He did this four or five times.” She told an arraignment judge that her pain was immense. He threatened to kill her and her family if she told anyone, she recalled. Still, she does not hate him. “It’s past. It’s over. I just feel sorry he did what he did.” The Djoumessis are in jail awaiting trials, scheduled to begin next month. Both have pleaded not guilty. The husband’s attorney, Bill Mitchell, dismisses the charges as the “silly” invention of a prosecutor in an election year, even while acknowledging that the girl was not allowed to go to school. “In essence, Mrs. Djoumessi agreed to be what amounts to a godmother—they call it ‘replacement mother’—for this young lady,” he says. “Was it a household where she was as free as most American kids? No. Does that make it kidnapping? Is this a child who was enslaved? That is ludicrous.” PB says she came to the United States after an associate of the Djoumessis’ falsified a birth certificate and passport for the girl, naming her the illegitimate daughter of Evelyn Djoumessi, and stole her into America under a waiver meant to reunite U.S. citizens with their foreign-born children.

According to what PB has told the authorities, the Djoumessis were cruel to her from the start. She slept in the basement, bathed using a bucket over a drain in the floor, and believed what they told her, that she would be arrested by American authorities if she wandered out on her own. She was made to wash and clean and feed the children, and get them to the bus, strip and wash and remake their beds, iron everything including their underwear, vacuum under the beds and mop the floors, make the dinner and clean the garage past midnight. She wrote forlorn letters to her parents, but police have since learned her alleged captors never mailed them; her parents wrote her, but the Djoumessis never delivered those letters, either, according to Betty L. Lowenthal, PB’s court-appointed attorney. She never left the house on her own. She never saw a school, which is what upsets her the most. “Here’s what he said to me: he has my life, he can do as he please with it. He can choose to send me to school. He can choose not to. I was being told that if I did tell someone, that I would go to jail.”

SCREAMING AND BEATINGS

But the Djoumessis also screamed at her and beat her, she says. The only time she allows her own anger to spark is when she points to each of the welts that make a galaxy on her forearms. “This is one right here, this is one right here, this is one right here, this is one right here, this is one right here,” she says, touching a fingertip to each purple reminder, “from belt beatings and high-heeled-shoe beatings and stick beatings.” Last winter, PB says, she learned that the Djoumessis planned

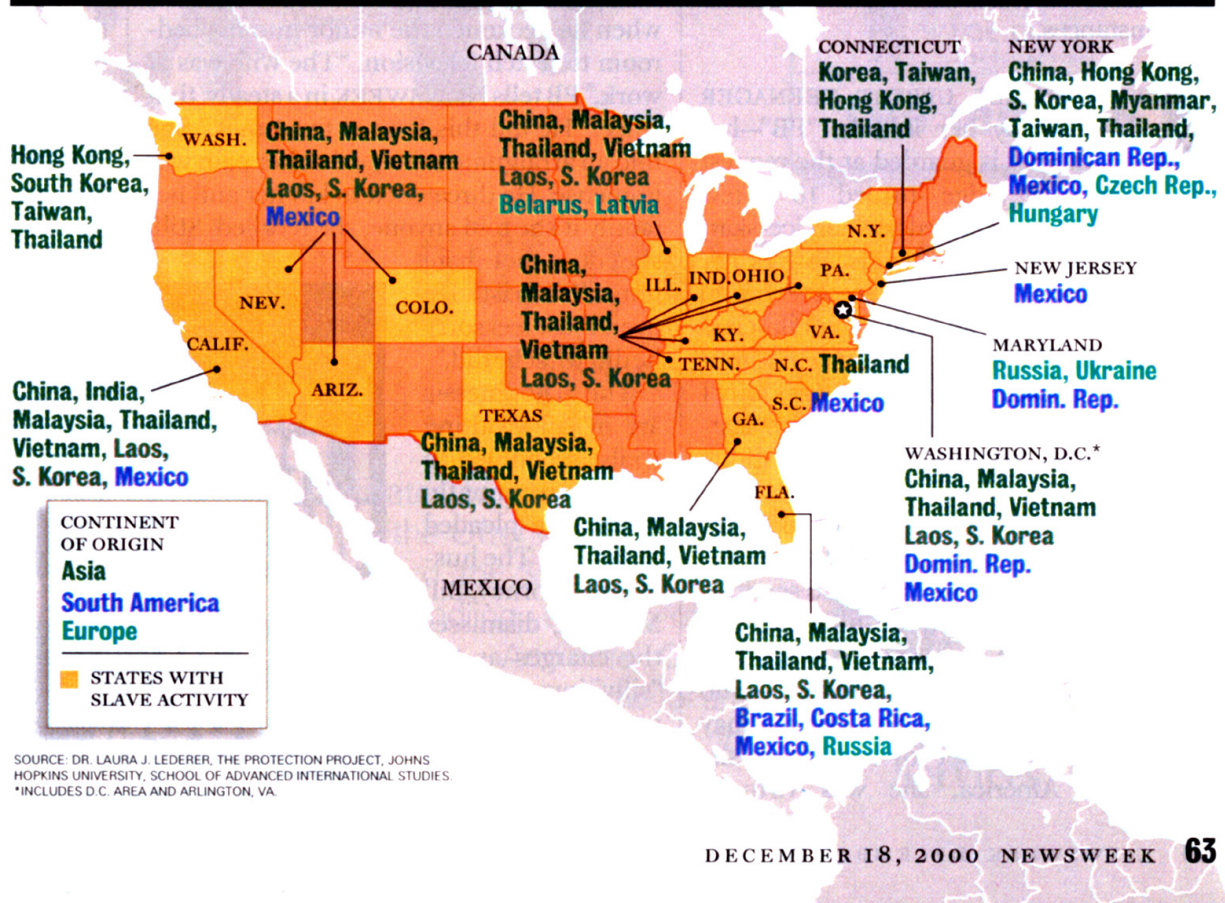
to return her to Cameroon and bring back a replacement. The thought of somebody else's enduring her suffering spurred her to action. "I was thinking way beyond the walls then," she says. "I was thinking, 'What would my future be like?' I was picturing what I had worked for in the past to get me to the seventh grade. I looked through all that. And I was thinking, 'Is all this going to go to waste?' I realized they were just playing games with me. All my life I have been told, 'Nothing will get you anywhere but your education.' That was stuck in my head. So I was looking beyond that and I said, 'No. This is too much to let it go to waste...' I could not take it anymore. I felt like exploding." That evening, she bundled up the garbage and headed for the curb. Instead, she walked just 20 feet across the yard and asked her startled neighbors for help. Each night for the next few weeks, garbage under her arm, she unfolded her story in cautious chapters to Susan Aschoff, a 51-year-old mother of children close to PB's age. "I was astonished," Aschoff says. "I had no idea she lived there. If the young lady had not found her way to me, I would still be in the dark." Shortly, Aschoff placed an anonymous telephone call to the local child protective services office. It sent police right away. Within hours, PB was in foster care and Evelyn Djoumessi was being questioned. She insisted PB was her daughter. But then an astute officer asked her when her daughter's birthday was. She did not know it. PB is making up for lost time with remarkable speed. She is a 10th grader now, a cheerleader and a swim-team member. If the INS permits her to apply for residency, as her attorney expects, she hopes to stay in America through college, and even dreams of becoming a country-Western singer—more than anything, she says, Shania Twain's lyrics sustained her over the most difficult years. She offers a sample, beaming as she stretches her click-clack Cameroonian accent into a Nashville twang. Appropriately, the song begins: "Back through the years/ I go wandering once again/ Back through the seasons of my youth."

REACHING A BREAKING POINT

Early this year Christi Elangwe reached a breaking point much as PB did, after her alleged captors finally capitulated and began driving her to GED classes two mornings a week. A GED was not what she had in mind. She believed she'd earned the right to attend an ordinary school with people her age. "That's what made me come," she says. She told everyone in class about her circumstances. Despite what her alleged captors had warned, nothing bad happened. Instead, the grapevine carried her story to Louis Etongwe, a 45-year-old Gateway Computer employee in Newport News, Va. Etongwe, a fellow Cameroonian, runs a sort of underground railroad to help free young women from peonage as domestics. Joy Zarembka, executive director of the Campaign for Migrant Domestic Workers, calls people like him "the good Samaritans who are dismantling slavery case by case in the country." Etongwe called Elangwe one morning when she was home alone. "I asked her if she was safe," he recalls. "I asked her if she needed any help." She wouldn't say. "I was scared," Elangwe remembers. "At first I didn't believe him." He placed more secret calls in the next month before she spilled everything. "What she told me really created a sour, bitter feeling in my mind," says Louis Etongwe. "I couldn't believe in this day and age someone would treat someone's child that way. It made me so mad. I said, 'You have to get out of that place'." With prodding, she agreed. She made her move early on Feb. 10, after Vivian Satia dropped her off at GED classes. Instead of going in, she sneaked onto a city bus—her first solo bus ride—and rode a few blocks to the meeting place Etongwe selected. ESCAPE As escapes go, it lacked crackling drama. But Elangwe was terrified nonetheless. It was the first time in five years she had defied her masters. "If you've ever been to a dog shelter, that's the fear that she had when I first met her," says her lawyer. "It was all so new to her that she had any rights at all and that she could pursue them. And that anybody in the

TRAGIC TRADE: The Routes of Human Traffic

According to government estimates, 50,000 women are brought into the United States each year and forced to work as prostitutes. Where sex slaves come from (1994-1999):



larger world would value her as a human being.” The INS has “paroled” her into the United States to pursue criminal litigation, and on Nov. 20, Elangwe filed a civil suit against the couple, charging they violated the 13th Amendment of the Constitution prohibiting slavery. She seeks more than \$1 million in back wages and punitive damages. She may be allowed to stay here at least through her civil suit, Smitson says, but that’s not the reason they filed it. “I see it as a reaffirmation of her value as a human being.” Elangwe is somewhat more focused on the practical than that. “I’m trying to save,” she says with a smile. “I still have to go to school.”

—Sarah Downey in Chicago and Craig Nelson in Moscow © 2000 Newsweek, Inc.

HOW PROPHECY IS FULFILLED

Roderick Graciano
November 2015

When interpreting the prophetic Scriptures, we must remember that **biblical prophecy is often fulfilled by cumulative events**. Not infrequently, multiple events will combine, over a long stretch of time, to fulfill a biblical prophecy. This does not mean that biblical prophecies have *double* or *hidden* meanings. Beecher¹ has attempted to express this principle by speaking of a *generic prophecy* “which regards an event as occurring in a series of parts separated by intervals, and expresses itself in language that may apply indifferently to the nearest part, or to the remoter parts, or to the whole—in other words a prediction which, in applying to the whole of a complex of event, also applies to some of the parts.” Mickelsen speaks of “typological predictions” that “refer to something prior to New Testament times although it finds its highest application of meaning in the events, people, or message of the New Testament. The betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver is an example of this kind of prediction (Mat 27.9-10; Zec 11.12-13). In Zechariah it was the prophet himself, acting as a shepherd for his people in [God]’s place, who was evaluated for thirty pieces of silver.”²

A good way to understand prophetic fulfillment is to see it as a process, like the painting of a picture. One event may supply the background of the painting, another some of the foreground setting, but the picture is not finished, i.e., the canvas is not fulfilled as intended, until the primary subject of the picture is finally painted into the foreground.



Another way to state the principle is that a prophecy is often followed by one or more *foreshadowing fulfillments*, f^1 , f^2 , etc.

1 Quoted in Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1970), p.252.

2 A. Berkeley Mickelsen, Interpreting The Bible, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1963), p. 300.

Prophecy → Fulfillment f^n → Fulfillment f^Ω

These preliminary fulfillments, while having contemporary significance in their own time, provide context and perspective for the *final (omega) fulfillment*, f^Ω , yet to come.

As an example, Isaiah's prophecy of the virgin birth (Isa 7.14) had a foreshadowing fulfillment, f^1 , in the birth of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (Isa 8.3-4), but had its final and complete fulfillment, f^Ω , in the virgin birth of Jesus (Mat 1.21-24). In the foreshadowing fulfillment, little Maher's birth wasn't supernatural, and his mother was not a virgin *after* his conception, but he was a real human child, born of a Spirit-filled woman, and he served as a sign of salvation to Jerusalem and Judah. We see that this kind of preliminary fulfillment of the prophecy serves both to foreshadow and illuminate the yet-to-come final fulfillment.

We find the same principle of foreshadowing fulfillments at work in *biblical types*. A biblical type is simply a person, thing or event that foreshadows a more important person, thing or event. We may think of biblical types as "predictions in 3-D." It's easy to see a type and its simple fulfillment in examples like that of Isaac carrying the wood for the sacrifice on his back (Gen 22.6 = type), and Jesus carrying his own cross for the ultimate sacrifice (Joh 19.17 = fulfillment). However, there are more complex biblical types, like the flood waters (1Pe 3.20) which begin to be fulfilled by a subsequent, *corresponding type* (Greek = *antitypos*), in this case baptism (1Pe 3.21), which points to the *ultimate fulfillment* (the cleansing of our consciences by the judgment that fell upon Christ, appropriated by our faith in His resurrection, 1Pe 3.21). The writer of Hebrews uses this same pattern of "type → corresponding type → fulfillment" in describing the blueprint for the tabernacle (Greek = *typos*, Heb 8.5), the man-made sanctuary (Greek = *antitypos*, Heb 9.24), and finally the real sanctuary of heaven itself (Heb 9.24). As with foreshadowing fulfillments of prophecy, corresponding types (called antitypes in the Bible) serve to further illuminate the greater reality in heaven or still to come on earth.

Here is the pattern we need to watch for:

prophecy/type → foreshadowing fulfillment/corresponding type → fulfillment

This prophetic and typological pattern has direct application for interpreting the apocalyptic predictions concerning the antichrist and the abomination of desolation. Daniel predicted both the antichrist (implicitly) and the abomination of desolation (explicitly). Many commentators see a fulfillment of these predictions in the profanation of the temple by Antiochus IV "Epiphanes" in 167 B.C. First Maccabees 1.54 supports their interpretation: "On the fifteenth day of Chisleu, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year,

they erected a *desolating sacrilege* upon the altar of burnt offering.” However, Jesus Christ, in AD 30 spoke of the “abomination of desolation” as yet future (Mat 24.15).

Then again, the church historian, Eusebius (writing around AD 324), in his Ecclesiastical History, 3.5, described how “the abomination of desolation, proclaimed by the prophets, stood in the very temple of God” when the army of the Roman Titus desecrated the Jerusalem temple in AD 70. Was the Roman desecration the final (Ω) fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy?

The full context of Christ’s Olivet Discourse (Mat 24), and the added detail of the book of Revelation, tell us No: there is still an abomination of desolation still to come, immediately preceding the *parousia*, the return of Jesus. Therefore, we recognize that both Antiochus IV (167 BC) and Titus (AD 70) *did* fulfill Daniel’s prophecy, but as *antitypes*, i.e., as corresponding types, that yet foreshadowed an ultimate fulfillment in the one whom Paul called “the man of lawlessness,” i.e., the final Antichrist (1Jo 2.18), who will proclaim himself god in the temple (2Th 2.3-4).

Remembering that the fulfillment of biblical prophecy is often a *process* will keep us from discarding end-time prophecy as something that has already been fulfilled by events in history and has no relevance for the future.

