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Berean
Call

JUNE 2012

THE HARBINGER—A MATTER OF CRITICAL DISCERNMENT

by T. A. McMAHON

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rulers of the city, crying, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;” [Ac 16:20] • dragged him unto Athens; and brought forth a sermon unto Silas and

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THE BEREAN CALL

“[The Bereans] . . . searched the scriptures daily, [to see] whether those things were so.”—Acts 17:11

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The Harbinger—A Matter of Critical Discernment

T. A. McMahon

The Harbinger is a novel that is becoming very popular among both Christians and non-Christians, even reaching the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list at this writing. What makes it worthy of review, like other books that we have addressed is that it offers an important opportunity for believers to exercise critical discernment. In this case, author Jonathan Cahn believes that he has discovered prophetic signs from God that are found in the Old Testament and directly apply to the United States, referring in particular to the events surrounding the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Because *The Harbinger* (*TH*) is a fictional novel with a large dose of nonfiction added (Scripture), this critique involves two aspects: 1) a personal, subjective opinion, and 2) a more objective consideration of the author’s application of Scripture in his novel.

Whenever we read a fictional story or see a movie, our evaluation is almost always subjective, e.g., what we like or don’t like about it. As the untutored art critic might say, “I don’t know anything about art, but I know what I like!” Even an art aficionado with some expertise rarely gets beyond the subjective, although he has a great deal more criteria than the everyday art lover for evaluating a work of art. In the end, it’s still just his opinion.

In my opinion, *The Harbinger* is a poor script. I say “script” because it reads more like a script than like a novel, lacking nearly all of the elements that go into making a first-rate work of fiction. It tries to fit into the genre of *National Treasure* and *The Da Vinci Code* but fails miserably in my view—and I’m hardly an admirer of *The Da Vinci Code*. The redundancy throughout the book borders on being insufferable. If it were eliminated, *TH* could easily have been reduced to half its size. In addition, the dialog is repetitious, yet little if any insight into the story’s characters is provided, with the result that we don’t get to know them any better than we would a stranger whom we might sit next to on a three-minute subway ride.

Good fiction has drama. *TH* reads like a nine-part seminar, ending with a two-chapter

tract. I actually liked some aspects of the last two chapters (though I thought I’d never get there as I struggled through the previous ones). If there had been a clear gospel presentation, these chapters might have the basis for a good tract—but definitely not for a good fictional story. Again, these are simply my opinions. I have little doubt that some will disagree, especially those who are fans of the book.

On the other hand, although *TH* is a fictional account that invites subjective criticism, it makes numerous claims regarding actual signs or harbingers from God—which it attempts to justify by supporting them with Scriptures. God’s Word, however, is not fiction. That subjects *TH* to factual evaluation, because the Bible is God’s objective truth. Therefore, we can challenge Cahn’s claims objectively by searching the Scriptures to see if they indeed are true (Acts 17:11). As Isaiah wrote, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to [God’s] word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). Jesus reinforced Isaiah’s exhortation in His prayer for believers to His Father: “Sanctify [meaning ‘set them apart’] . . . through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

The clarion call of *The Harbinger*, which seems to be quite sincere and is one with which all Christians might agree, is that the American people must repent of their evil ways and turn to God in truth. Amen to that! The major problem, however, is the way that the fictional story attempts to encourage such repentance. It declares that God has sent signs—nine harbingers—to the United States as a wake-up call that the country might take heed, repent, and thus ward off His impending judgment. If Cahn is mistaken about the harbingers and multitudes believe what he asserts, then he has led them astray. That is a serious issue and would identify him as a false teacher. Teaching God’s people wrongly carries a “greater condemnation” (James 3:1).

The main characters in the story are a journalist and a mysterious prophet. The central contemporary event related to the harbingers is the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center in New York City. As the fictional story unfolds, it is revealed that the harbingers of warning and judgment are directly related to a prophecy found in the Book of Isaiah. Here is where the major thesis of the book fails the Prophet

Isaiah’s own challenge of Isaiah 8:20: the author, Jonathan Cahn, has spoken “not according to [God’s] word” but has misapplied the scriptures in an attempt to support his own ideas throughout *The Harbinger*.

Cahn gleans nearly all of his correlations connecting America with a prophecy made to Israel from one verse—Isaiah 9:10. To begin with, this verse applies only to the tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, who, along with the Southern Kingdom of Judah, comprise God’s covenant people. All the way through *TH*, the United States is presented implicitly as a nation in covenant with God. No, God has only one covenant nation—the nation of Israel. This is a critical error of the book. Although that may be overlooked by someone eager to recognize the U.S. in Isaiah’s prophecy, one must read the entire context, which begins with verse 8 and runs through verse 21 of chapter 9.

Cahn flip-flops between God’s judgment and God’s warning, giving the latter more emphasis as he promotes the idea that if the U.S. will heed the warning and repent of its evil ways and turn back to God, restoration and blessing will follow. Although that principle is true for every individual who turns to Him, Cahn picked the wrong passage of Scripture as a hopeful warning for America. In fact, the entire context of Isaiah 9:8-21 is a prophecy of judgment of the most devastating kind. God declares that He will send Israel’s enemies to “devour” them (v. 12), destroying her corrupt leaders and lying prophets (vv. 15-16), and “for all this,” His anger would not subside, and in His wrath He would not show them mercy. The carnage would result in civil wars among the tribes of Israel—brother against brother—with utter destruction, starvation, cannibalism (vv. 19-20), and finally captivity by her enemy. Even so, “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out [against Israel] still” (v. 21). No “warning” is even hinted at in these verses.

Cahn’s isolation of Isaiah 9:10 and his symbolic interpretation of that verse to make it fit the September 11, 2001, jihadist attack on the U.S. is preposterous. (It’s also very odd that nowhere in the book is Islam or the term “Muslim” mentioned.) Nevertheless, as tragic as 9/11 was, what reasonably discerning person would see this as comparable to Isaiah’s account of God’s judgment on the

Northern Kingdom of Israel? Furthermore, even a cursory review of American history will bring to mind far more devastating events than 9/11, from Washington, D.C. being burned and sacked in the War of 1812, to the Civil War, to Pearl Harbor, to the debacle in Vietnam, etc. Ignoring such events, Cahn zeroes in on the devastation of “Ground Zero” as verification that God has removed His “hedge of protection” from the United States. How Cahn decides what events of contemporary history God is using for His very specific purposes is troubling. Are they Cahn’s own prophetic insights or just his speculations? If the former, he is on very tenuous ground.

For many, selectivity on Cahn’s part creates some of the most compelling assertions in the novel. Again and again, as G. Richard Fisher of Personal Freedom Outreach has noted, “Cahn is playing on the old mistake of saying [that] similarity means identity.” The nine harbingers are selectively (and erroneously) taken from Scripture and are then given life by the comparison to similar things surrounding 9/11, which are then identified with Isaiah 9:10. That’s the faulty method. Fisher explains, “Similarity is not identity. A \$100 bill is similar to monopoly money, which is paper, has numbers on it, and is referred to as money.” To attempt to tie them together beyond that similarity, like paying a bill with monopoly money, will have embarrassing consequences at least.

Isaiah 9:10 cannot be identified with America and 9/11, and that’s all one has to understand in order to reject Cahn’s book. Yet, for those enamored with *The Harbinger* and still not convinced of its serious biblical problems, consider a few of the harbingers themselves (there’s not enough space here to evaluate all of them). The sycamore and cedar trees are mentioned in Isaiah 9:10: “The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.” The passage uses sycamores as a metaphor for weaker trees being replaced by stronger, taller cedars in an act of arrogant defiance by the Israelites, who will not submit to God. Cahn points to a singular sycamore and what he refers to as a type of cedar tree (actually a Norway Spruce) that replaced it at Ground Zero as harbingers connected to Isaiah 9:10. Although there is a *similarity*, it takes a great deal of subjective wrangling by Cahn in his attempt to make it match Isaiah’s prophecy. The context does not allow Cahn’s claims.

Another harbinger of warning to America is referred to as “The Tower.” Cahn seems

hard pressed to make a biblical connection to a tower other than a vague reference that the main character makes when he’s asked how he would know what the Tower of Babel looked like. He replies, “I don’t, but I’ve seen pictures of it.” That inane statement aside, Babel was not a Jewish tower. Nevertheless, Cahn finds a Jewish tower that he believes fits. But he had to go to the Septuagint, the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, for help. Isaiah 9:10 in the Greek is translated thus: “The bricks are fallen down, but come, let us hew stones, and cut down sycamores and cedars, and let us *build for ourselves a tower*.” So, he has his “tower,” but not without an inherent problem for “harbingers six and seven.” Those harbingers are dependent upon a cedar replacing a sycamore tree. The Greek translation says “sycamores and cedars” are “cut down”; the Hebrew says that sycamores (plural) will be changed with cedars (plural). It would seem that Cahn can’t have both his “Septuagint” tower and his “Hebrew” replacement cedar (singular). They contradict one another. [For further explanation, refer to the *TBC* Extra page in this issue.]

There are numerous other problems with the harbingers, even though they are constructed subjectively and selectively by Cahn. Granted, the author does raise an intriguing date phenomenon related to the economic misfortunes connected with 9/11 when he attempts to link the Jewish *shemitah*, the Torah law of letting the land lie fallow and the forgiving of debts in the seventh year of a seven-year cycle, as a warning to the U.S. No matter what one conjectures regarding the significance of a stock market crash occurring on the first day of *shemitah*, the *shemitah* itself has no bearing on anyone or anything other than the nation of Israel. It has never applied to the Gentile nations, either in actual practice or figuratively in Scripture. To superimpose a connection with America is just that—a superimposition.

Another imposition from Cahn’s imagination is his suggestion that the inauguration of George Washington in New York City was a “consecration” of America to God similar to Solomon’s consecration of the Temple in Jerusalem. To even compare the two verges on blasphemy, especially because history reveals that much Masonic ritual was involved, as well as the “works-salvation” doctrine of Masonry contained in Washington’s speech. It was more suitable to the god of the Masonic Lodge, the Great Architect of the Universe, than to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of the Bible.

Part of the dilemma in criticizing *The Harbinger* is that if the foundational error in it is not acknowledged (that America has some sort of covenant with God, and that there is a direct biblical correlation between Israel and the U.S. in the events of 9/11 and following), that opens the door for the acceptance of the book’s many fallacious ideas. This creates a perception of “credibility” simply by entering into a dispute over them. Even so, because most of them are so obviously wrong, pointing any one of them out to someone enthralled with the book may still be helpful. Some of these things are addressed in other parts of this newsletter and will be touched on in our future issues as questions arise.

One final thought—we all know the saying, “You shouldn’t judge a book by its cover,” and that’s a reasonable statement. But I like to check out book covers to see who’s endorsing them. That’s hardly a fail-safe practice, but it can put me on “discernment alert” if it raises red flags. In the case of *The Harbinger*, a big red flag went up regarding the publisher. Though the cover says “Front Line,” it’s actually an imprint title of Charisma Media/Charisma House Book Group, the publisher of *Charisma* magazine. For those not familiar with *Charisma*, there is no other publication that has supported and promoted more of the unbiblical Word/Faith teachers, the “wealth and health” preachers, the Kingdom/Dominionists, the Apostles and Prophets of the New Apostolic Reformation, the so-called spirit revivals of the Toronto Airport Vineyard, the Brownsville Revival, the Lakeland Revivals, the Latter Rain/Manifest Sons of God, and so forth. There is some irony in the fact that in chapter 9 of Isaiah, *TH*’s key biblical chapter, God brings down His judgment upon Israel because of “lying prophets.” *Charisma* has over the years featured many who fit that description. That doesn’t automatically throw *TH* into a bin of rotten apples, but it should at least cause one to examine its fruit very carefully. Jesus said, “A corrupt tree [cannot] bring forth good fruit” and “by their fruits ye shall know them.”

These are days of rampant and beguiling apostasy. We need, therefore, to test all things by the Scriptures so that we do not “slip” away from God’s truth (Hebrews 2:1). We also need to pray for and encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ that we all might be biblically discerning regarding the latest agenda, movement, trend, or *popular book* that is adversely influencing multitudes in the body of Christ. **TBC**

Quotable

Happiness is caused by things that happen around me, and circumstances will mar it; but joy flows right on through trouble; joy flows on through the dark; joy flows in the night as well as in the day; joy flows all through persecution and opposition. It is an unceasing fountain bubbling up in the heart; a secret spring the world can't see and doesn't know anything about. The Lord gives his people perpetual joy when they walk in obedience to him.

A great many people are trying to make peace, but that has already been done. God has not left it for us to do; all we have to do is to enter into it.

D. L. Moody

Q&A

QUESTION: Your TBC Daily Update on *The Hunger Games* (4/4/2012) seems to have missed the point. The intention of *The Hunger Games* is to show what humans are capable of, and the teenagers I know who saw it were horrified and ready and willing to discuss the horrors of the film, including the adults in the film, etc. They couldn't stand watching most of it, but the moral lessons were certainly there, very much so. Did you miss them?

RESPONSE: In this regard, one should not presume to know "the intention of" the author. (The plotline is hardly original, but may still be analyzed in far greater philosophical and political depth than is initially evident). It is grievous, however, to overlook repulsive "horrors" in order to frame a discussion of morality. Similar attempts have been made to defend the "moral lessons" in the violent occult fiction of the *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* series—both of which were the products of spirit-channeled "inspiration," according to the authors (http://goodfight.org/a_co_twilight_harrypotter.html).

In contrast, the Lord's instructions are to "set no wicked thing before mine eyes: [and] hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me" (Psalm 101:3). The Lord calls us to a life of holiness and obedience. Consequently, Paul wrote to the Romans, "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet *I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil*" [our emphasis] (Romans 16:19).

Furthermore, attempts to teach moral lessons by "fear" has a demonstrated rate of failure. Social programs such as "Scared Straight" used in-your-face threats of violence by convicts to convince teens of the

consequences of crime. The program was discontinued after it was seen to be inspiring too many adolescents to *copy* the behavior they were allegedly being "scared" from. Why should we not anticipate the same results from attempts to "moralize" *The Hunger Games* (THG)? At best, the morals and ethics of every character in THG is situational—and encourages (or at least excuses) vigilante justice. This is an appeal to the flesh, not to biblical truth: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Consider the comments of just one reviewer: "This is a very poignant criticism of our culture, and one that deserves to be taken seriously. But for all the beauty and moral high ground this story contains, it's just as true that the world Collins has created is terribly evil. Teenagers are dispatched throughout the movie by knives, swords, and mutated dogs; adults are either too powerless or corrupt to help; and Katniss herself experiences an inward despair that will (in coming installments) lead her to attempt suicide. For some viewers at least—especially younger or more impressionable teens—*The Hunger Games* may produce the same deadening effect on the conscience that Collins seeks to warn us against" (<http://www.worldmag.com/articles/19312>).

QUESTION: If all of the Bible is inspired by God and is good for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16,17) and if God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), can't Old Testament teachings and especially prophecies made to Israel also be applied to America?

RESPONSE: The Old Testament does contain numerous things applicable to believers today, including the history of God's dealing with humanity, and in particular, with Israel. "Now all these things happened unto them [Israel] for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). Clearly, we can draw an application for our edification from the Old Testament.

It also gives us prophecy, some of which (but not all, as yet) have been fulfilled in the New Testament, giving us assurance that our faith is not a "blind faith" but established by testable evidence. It tells of creation and the Lord's design for this world and its inhabitants. It also speaks of the salvation that will be fully revealed in Christ.

The key to understanding how the Old Testament is to be used today is basic to Paul's admonition, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word

of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Consequently, we must discern to *whom the Lord is speaking* and *what applications may reasonably pertain* to a certain subject. This is a matter of recognizing the context and understanding the content. As the saying goes, "A text taken out of context is a pretext." When that happens, the text cannot be correctly understood at best and will be misleading at worst.

For example, if a believer today takes David's words in the Psalms: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (51:11) and attempts to apply them to himself, he has missed the context and has contradicted a New Testament doctrine. When David sinned, as he did with Bathsheba, the Holy Spirit left him. When he repented by confessing his sin to God, the Holy Spirit was restored to him, enabling him to write the Psalm. The Holy Spirit did not take up permanent residence within a believer until *after Christ ascended into heaven* (John 16:7). When a believer sins today, God will convict and correct him (Hebrews 12:5-7), but He will not take His Holy Spirit from him (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The Old Testament provides for believers today a historical record of the people and events that can be proven. We can get a glimpse of our God's longsuffering with His people. We learn to have a fear of the Lord (for this is the beginning of wisdom—Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10). We see that in spite of all that Israel has done, our God is merciful. He does not completely destroy them (Isaiah 10:20-22). We get a view as to the holiness of God and see how seriously God reacts to sin. These are only a few.

Looking, however, to prophecies given specifically to Israel and attempting to apply them to the American people in anything more than a general or spiritual way is taking erroneous liberties with both the context and the content.

We can learn from a prophetic judgment against Israel that God will deal with us *personally* regarding our sins of idolatry. But God does not judge America as a nation because He has no covenant with America—or any other Gentile nation for that matter. God has a covenant only with the nation of Israel, whom He has judged and will continue to judge in accordance to His prophecies.

God's *call to repentance*, on the other hand, certainly goes out to unbelieving Americans (as well as to believers who need to repent), as it does to unbelievers throughout the world. There is, however, no collective salvation for Gentile nations, although salvation is offered to *individuals* within those nations.

We need to heed Paul's exhortation to be careful regarding how we apply the Word of God (1 Corinthians 3:10).



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS to CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What Role Do Evidence and Reason Play?

QUESTION: I can see that it makes no sense and would be very dangerous to believe something simply because some church or religious leader says I must do so. Clearly there must be some basis for believing. But I'm confused, because it wouldn't seem to be "faith" if reason and evidence support my belief.

RESPONSE: Your confusion comes from imagining that if reason and evidence were involved at all in faith, that would cause faith to become completely rational—which, I agree, would make no sense. Clearly no faith is required to believe anything that is self-evident or that can be proved completely, such as the fact that the sun is in the sky and sending its warmth to earth.

ON THE OTHER HAND, reason and evidence may legitimately point the direction for faith to go—and must do so. Indeed, faith must not violate evidence and reason or it would be irrational. Faith takes a step beyond reason but only in the direction that reason and evidence have pointed.

The idea of a "leap of faith" (that faith must be irrational) has been promoted by some schools of philosophy and religion. If that were true, however, there would be no basis other than feelings or intuition for what one believes. As a consequence, one could believe or have faith in anything. As the saying goes, "If it works for you, it's okay"—a senseless idea that denies the absoluteness of truth.

By this theory, it is *faith* that is important rather than the *object* of one's faith. Never mind *what* one believes. One has to believe in *something*, so take the leap. It is the *believing* that causes the effect one seeks—a theory that has some temporary and limited truth. Yes, believing in the Star Wars Force or that God is some kind of magic genie who exists to do one's bidding may indeed bring a superficial sense of well-being for a time. Eventually, however, that belief will prove to be a delusion, and the bubble of euphoria will burst, leaving the person worse off than before.

Faith Is a Response to Proven Truth

On the surface it may seem legitimate to reject reason and evidence, because God is far beyond our ability to fully comprehend and thus beyond any *proof* we could understand. How could evidence, much less proof, have any part to play in one's faith in God? As we have noted, however, if reason doesn't have *some* role to play, then one could believe in any kind of "god"—an idea that is clearly false. One must have *some* evidence even to believe there is a God. Otherwise, how could the idea of God be sustained?

Thankfully, the evidence is all around us: "The heavens declare the glory of God. . . . For the invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being

understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they [all mankind] are without excuse" (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20). One cannot learn very much of the incredible nature of the universe, from the beautiful simplicity of the atomic structure of the elements to the incomprehensible complexity of a living cell with ten thousand chemical reactions going on at once in perfect balance with one another, without realizing that it couldn't have happened by chance.

The design of a leaf (and how much more so of the human brain) demands an intelligent Designer who Himself is beyond our highest thought or He wouldn't be capable of creating and governing the universe. It is certainly appropriate to observe the incredible order in the universe and from such evidence to draw the conclusion that the universe and we ourselves couldn't have happened by chance but must have been designed and created by an intelligent Being capable of doing so. *Evidence and reason point to God.* This is not only legitimate but an essential first step in knowing Him.

This God, however, in order to be the Creator and Sustainer of the universe must have capabilities that are infinitely beyond our capacity to comprehend. Reason can follow the evidence only so far and then finds itself beyond its ability to go any further. It is at this point that faith takes the next step, a step that is beyond the capacity of reason to accompany it but that is (and must be) in the *direction* that reason and the evidence have pointed.

The atheist sees the same evidence, and he too takes a step of "faith" beyond reason. Sadly, however, in trying to escape the consequences of admitting God's existence and thus his accountability to his Creator, the atheist takes a "leap of faith" in the opposite direction from which reason and the evidence so clearly point. He chooses to deny the evidence, and thus his "faith" is totally irrational and therefore not genuine faith at all.

There is much other specific evidence for believing both in God and in the Bible as His Word, and we will deal with that evidence later.

TBC NewsWatch

IS THE CLIMATE CONSENSUS BEGINNING TO CHANGE?

FRONT PAGE MAG, 4/18/12: IS THE CLIMATE CONSENSUS BEGINNING TO CHANGE? [EXCERPTS]—The current scientific consensus on Global Warming and Climate Change (or Global Weirding or Global Climactic Disruption, etc.) may be slowly shifting away from the catastrophism of the United Nations IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report.

More recently, a coalition of 49 former NASA scientists and seven Apollo astronauts has accused the bureaucracy of both NASA and the Goddard Institute of Space Studies, with which it is affiliated, of diddling with the facts. They write: "We believe that [their] claims that man-made carbon dioxide is having a catastrophic impact on global climate change are not substantiated, especially when considering thousands of years of empirical data." ("Watts Up With That," April 10, 2012).

Further, the Interim Report of the Non-governmental International Panel on Climate Change (NIPCC) of August 29, 2011 showed unambiguously that the UN suppressed or ignored much of the countervailing data that challenged its official position.

[I]n November 2009, the Hadley Climate Research Unit was hacked, releasing thousands of files suggesting a covert mega-operation to propagate an Anthropogenic Global Warming myth. It had become undeniable that data was tampered with to paint the desired canvas, that counter-evidence was deliberately squelched, that character assassination against climate skeptics was an accepted tactic and that experimental results were falsely replicated. The notorious Wikileaks cable dump made it even clearer that the climate "consensus" was more of a political gambit than a scientific project (guardian.co.uk, December 3, 2010).

Even some of the specialists involved in the enterprise have begun to question or object to the findings as, to quote from the emails, "not statistically significant," as "truly pathetic," and as "defending something that increasingly cannot be defended." Nevertheless, "The same science personalities at the top of the United Nations climate research machine," writes Terence Corcoran, "are back, parading before readers in all their blundering glory" (National Post, November 23, 2011). The lead researcher at the East Anglia CRU, Phil Jones, has gone so far as to recommend deleting all incriminating

emails and/or changing the wording of others.

Myron Ebell, director of the nonprofit Competitive Enterprise Institute Center on Energy and the Environment (CEI), has said it definitively. "If there were any doubts remaining...the new batch of E-mails...make it clear" that the IPCC "is an organized conspiracy dedicated to tricking the world into believing that global warming is a crisis that requires a drastic response" (CEI online, November 22, 2011).

MERCHANTS OF DESPAIR

FRONTPAGEMAG, 5/7/12: [EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. ROBERT ZUBRIN, PRESIDENT OF PIONEER ASTRONAUTICS AND A SENIOR FELLOW WITH THE CENTER FOR SECURITY POLICY. HIS LATEST BOOK IS MERCHANTS OF DESPAIR: RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS, CRIMINAL PSEUDO-SCIENTISTS, AND THE FATAL CULT OF ANTIHUMANISM]—Al Gore is trying to turn *antihumanism* into a global cult. Just have a look at this quote from his book *An Inconvenient Truth*: "The climate crisis also offers us the chance to experience what very few generations in history have had the privilege of knowing: a generational mission; the exhilaration of a compelling moral purpose; a shared and unifying cause; the thrill of being forced by circumstances to put aside the pettiness and conflict that so often stifle the restless human need for transcendence; the opportunity to rise...When we rise, we will experience an epiphany as we discover that this crisis is not really about politics at all. It is a moral and spiritual challenge."

It is revealing that Gore chose the words "An Inconvenient Truth" as the title of his book. That phrase could be the virtual chorus line for all the antihuman movements for the past 200 years who used pseudoscientific arguments to demand that people harden their hearts to the human misery purported to be necessary, i.e.: It is an inconvenient truth that:

Thomas Malthus: "the Irish must be swept from the land."

Charles Darwin: "the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world."

Madison Grant (Author, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 1916): "indiscriminate efforts to preserve babies among the lower classes often results in serious injury to the race... It is an inconvenient truth that "the laws of nature require the obliteration of the unfit and human life is valuable only when it is of use to the community or race."

John Holdren and Paul Ehrlich, (authors *Global Ecology*, 1971): "when a population of organisms grows in a finite environment, sooner or later it will encounter a resource limit. This phenomenon, described by ecologists as reaching the 'carrying capacity' of the environment, applies to bacteria on a culture dish, to fruit flies in a jar of agar, and to buffalo on a prairie. It must also apply to man on this finite planet."

The Club of Rome (authors *Mankind at a Turning Point*, 1974): "the world has cancer, and the cancer is Man."

Alexander King (founder, *The Club of Rome*, 1990): "DDT...has greatly added to the population problem."

LEGISLATURE IMPROVES HOMESCHOOL LAW

HTTP://WWW.HSLDA.ORG/HS/STATE/GA/201205070.ASP: LEGISLATURE IMPROVES HOMESCHOOL LAW—With the signature of Governor Nathan Deal on House Bill 39 on May 1, 2012, Georgia enacted significant improvements to its homeschool law. Effective with the 2012–2013 school year, parents will no longer have to submit monthly attendance records to their local public school superintendent. Instead, the records will be submitted only once a year to the Georgia Department of Education. Additionally, the initial and annual declaration of intent to conduct a home study program will be filed with the department of education instead of the local superintendent.

Submission of monthly attendance records has always been a thorn in the flesh of homeschoolers in Georgia. Problems with parents missing the end-of-month deadline by a few days or misplaced records by school officials often led to inappropriate action by the school district. School districts routinely reported families to social services for educational neglect or threatened truancy charges against family members. They also initiated action to bring about the revocation of the driver's license of students by reporting excessive absences to the department of driver services. Annual reporting at the end of the school year should bring an end to these excessive and unwarranted enforcement actions.

Filing the declaration of intent with the department of education removes the local school district from the administrative process of beginning and continuing a home study program. HSLDA's experience has been that the less involvement homeschoolers have with the local school district, the fewer legal problems they have.

T. A.'s Speaking Schedule

Jul 28-29	Calvary Chapel Kalamazoo Kalamazoo, MI (269) 388-5127
Aug 10-11	TBC Conference Bend, OR (800) 937-6638
Aug 17	Saltburn Evangelical Church Saltburn-by-Sea, North Yorkshire 01287 624 221
Aug 18-19	Reddish Christian Fellowship Reddish, Stockport 0161 432 7155
Aug 22	Stroud Green Christian Fellowship Barrow-on-Trent 01494 764 913
Aug 24	PWMI Newport South Wales Newport 01495 772 323
Aug 25-28	Truth 4 Youth Manaton, Devon 01929 472 484
Aug 29	Southampton Calvary Chapel Vermont Close, Southampton 01494 764 913
Aug 30	Bere Regis Evangelical Church Bere Regis, Dorset 01929 472 484
Aug 31	Hephzibah in Marlow Marlow, Bucks 01494 764 913
Sep 1-2	Newent Christian Fellowship Newent, Gloucestershire 07715 364 475
Sep 2 (p.m.)	Bridge Lane Christian Fellowship London 020 89223979

Letters

TBC,

Just a thank you for the very impactful article, "A Generation Adrift." I absolutely found it to be so right on and very compelling that I was certainly convicted of my many shortcomings when raising my two daughters (now grown), but more importantly how to live out the rest of my life from here on out. This article was so important to me that I sent it to my boss (he's a Christian for sure), but we all need to wake up and get busy doing what God wants and not what...we want. Thank you! SM (TX)

Dear Dave, T. A., and staff,

The Berean Call ministry has been such a wonderful blessing to me over the years. I got saved just about the time [it] started.... When I got saved, I'd been praying to God

to help me not to be deceived. The Lord has answered this prayer by putting into my hands numerous helps to my Bible reading, such as *The Seduction of Christianity* by Dave Hunt.... To cut a long story short, The Berean Call has answered many of my questions and confirmed much of what I believe. My community has a large Roman Catholic population—mostly Irish—and also many Mormons.... I praise God for you all and pray often for this wonderful watchman ministry. God bless you all. BS (OR)

God Bless You TBC,

About 20 years ago I wrote to TBC concerning my son's behavior problems and how a church sent me to a shrink for my son to receive help. What I received from TBC was an absolute no. I knew it in my heart already...why was I going back (backwards) to the world for help?

I became very negative about church and pastors and ended up without help at all, but God did something amazing. During all these years of trials and extreme tribulation God delivered us. My son will be graduating from Bible college this year [and he and his fiancée] are praying for guidance from the Lord on plans to go to Taiwan....

The Lord has blessed me with my own thrift bread store and I give free Bibles, tracts, and your articles to my customers. My store has become a mission field right here in [my town] and I am still amazed at how God did these things in my life. I'm going through the consequences of my bad mistakes and sin but I'm so happy and really careful about mixing scripture with anything else. In my opinion it's either the Word or the world—you can't have both and walk in victory.

Thank you for your honesty and for telling me to go to God for help.... In my small amount of time knowing the Lord, I have learned that if you need help, always ask God first, and if you need feedback or support, go to a Bible-depending person and then go back to God with that advice as well. Only Jesus knows our true pains and needs. If He can save us, then He can help us, too! YM (NY)

Dear T. A.,

Your message at Finger Lakes was a bull's-eye! Suffering is a part of our walk with the Lord. It does silence the enemy when we endure it patiently! Praise God for your own testimony on suffering. TH (NY)

Dear Mr. Hunt and Mr. McMahon,

Thank you very much for all the spiritual encouragement and edification I receive from *The Berean Call*. Mr. McMahon, I also came out of Catholicism. I was an altar boy in Germany helping the priest during the

Mass. I remember confessing my sins to the priest and prayed five Hail Marys for it as the priest requested (we boys had a contest of who could pray the fastest).

I came to America in the 1950s and spent three years in the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict. The American girl whom I married while I was in the service took me to church to hear the gospel, and the Lord graciously saved me.

Thank you so much—the Lord has surely used you in my life. WK (NC)

Dear Brothers,

I am extremely grateful for complimentary issues of *The Berean Call* which you have been sending to me over the years. I am a zealous believer in Christ who has been incarcerated for the past 14 years. I have enjoyed each and every issue of *TBC* and have grown immensely through your teachings. I am writing to let you know that I was greatly blessed by your "Warning the Witnesses" and "The Gospel's Three Elements" in the February issue. I recently had the courage to witness to my cousin... (I prayed for courage and a filling of the Holy Spirit... and the Lord answered my prayers). I shared the gospel using many of the scriptures noted in [those] articles [though I received the newsletter afterward]. I will now send a copy of those articles to my cousin.... Again, thank you for your labor and your adherence to the truth proclaimed in God's Word—without compromise! Looking forward to seeing you in eternity. GP (NY, prisoner)

Dear Brother Dave,

I am writing to thank you for all the times you sounded a warning to the Body of Christ. Thank you for taking the time to research and teach on the false teachings creeping into the church. Thank you for your faithfulness to such a difficult assignment (1 Timothy 1:12). I salute you. FB (email)

Dear Dave,

For many years now I've been receiving *The Berean Call*. I have never written to you about how much your letter has meant to me.... Back in the 1980s we were members of a solid Baptist Church. I retired early... and God called me into ministry. For the past twenty-four years I've been working as a volunteer prison chaplain here in Ohio.

As you can imagine, men in prison are bombarded with all kinds of false doctrines and concepts. *The Berean Call* has been a source of reliable information and help that has guided me in teaching and preaching, as well as counseling men. I've written to men and women in prisons all over the U.S.A. and some foreign countries. The Lord has used [the newsletter] to help me tell it in true purity. JK (OH)

Hi Folks,

Just a note...to pass on my congratulations to Tom on his "A Generation Adrift" newsletter articles. This is a brilliant piece of writing that hits the gold in every way. I will be passing this on to many folks here who need to read this insight Tom brings to a very big problem. Biblical illiteracy here is rife and the churches here are full of people who simply do not bother to investigate scripture for themselves and today few even bother to have a Bible in their hand at a church meeting. I suppose it's not an unreasonable position when the guys "preaching" seem to rarely use it except for a couple of verses to lead into what is generally an exhortation of some pet point rather than solid biblical teaching....It was a great privilege to hear Tom speaking [here] recently...and to meet him. I pray that the Lord is keeping Dave in His perfect peace at this time. RN (New Zealand)

TBC,

I haven't decided whether I'm a Calvinist or not, but [your] argument is just plain terrible. To act like the whole Bible and all its concepts are so easy a child can understand it is ridiculous. If it were, you wouldn't have a column, now would you? Yes *everyone* can understand the basics of salvation—that we are sinners in need of a Savior, and Christ has provided that through faith. But Calvinism is one of those hard to understand concepts. I agree with you though, that it should not take years to understand, but neither is it easy. BF (email)

Mr. Hunt,

I have seen your videos on YouTube and I get your e-mail newsletters....Speaking for myself and on the behalf of several of my friends from the church, I would just like to thank you for your wonderful ministry. After following your online media for several years, you have gained our admiration and trust. What an honor it is to call you a Brother in Christ! DA (OR)

Dear Brother Dave,

I am writing this brief note to thank you most sincerely for your ministry. I've been buying and distributing your books and articles for some time....We met first at Niagara Falls many years ago. We have also visited the Bend, Oregon, office. You and I do not agree on the sovereignty of God issue (Calvinism), but I look forward to our being together in glory with you. Thank you again for your faithful ministry. VC (Canada)

TBC,

I've just read "Erasing Israel" by T. A. McMahon and "Prophets Who Prophecy Lies in My Name" by Paul Wilkinson

[Jan '12]....I am troubled by the sudden rise in anti-Israel and anti-Semitism in our nation, and especially among so called Christians....While the "Christian" anti-Semitic movement tries to convince us that it is only objecting to a "Nation of Israel," which they claim is illegitimate, they have no problem with founding Islamic Kosovo in Christian Yugoslavia....I cannot ignore the clear teaching of scripture regarding Israel, including Romans 11. Replacement theology is not based on the clear teaching of scripture; it is based on [the] reinterpretation of scripture. Anti-Semitism is just one more facet of the rot [that is] infecting contemporary Christianity. AB (WY)

Dear TBC,

I ran across Dave Hunt's *In Defense Of The Faith* at a thrift shop located in my hometown, run by the American Cancer society. I also discovered the DVD *Israel, Islam, and Armageddon* among a number of products being advertised by Publisher's Clearing House, a well-known sweepstakes organization that sells a wide variety of different products. I was amazed to find a work of Dave Hunt being advertised by an organization like them.

Truly, God seems to be making inroads even into places one would never expect. May God use the works and products of your ministry to reach as many people for Christ as possible and to inspire followers of Christ to look to the scriptures as their foundational and final authority in every part of their lives, to become more steadfast in the faith, bold in their witness for the Lord, to defend the faith and the authority of the Scriptures, to pursue godly living, and to seek out God's will and purpose for their lives. B&SE (email)

Dear TBC,

I praise God for The Berean Call. Listening to Dave and T. A. speak on the Bible really helps me to stay on focus and know [that] the Bible has all I will ever need; of course, the Bible already tells me that, but what I love about this ministry is [that] the focus is always on what the Word of God says. I love you all for being faithful to God's Word and defending the truth diligently and not wavering in your faith. I want the same for my family and myself—that we would stand firm, strong, and true always to God's Word, no matter the pressure from the world and even within the church. God bless you all. JW (email)

Dear TBC,

I have been a follower of Dave Hunt and his scholarly research since the mid-'80s, when he appeared on the *John Ankerberg Show*....Mr. Hunt has fearlessly and successfully exposed those particularly vile

television evangelists who prey upon the ignorant, and all those false religious leaders who have blatantly compromised the gospel of the grace of God for gain yet are doing so in Jesus' name! JS (WI)

TBC Notes

Combating the Reign of Confusion

I don't think it's my imagination that things seem to be getting more confusing in Christendom. Certainly the explosion in media has contributed to that condition. It used to be that anyone who wanted to communicate his theological perspective, after multiple rejections by Christian publishers, had to borrow money from a rich uncle and turn that amount over to a company that would print the book if the author agreed to purchase so many thousand copies. The end product would be stored in the author's garage since no distribution entities were lining up to sell his book. After a year or so, due mainly to the continuing complaints from the author's wife (that she wanted the space back in their garage to park her car), he would sadly haul the books off to the local dump. That was the heyday of self-publishing. For all of its problems, it nevertheless restricted potentially widespread theological confusion.

Today, thanks and no thanks to the internet and easy access to religious web and blog sites, confusion now reigns worldwide. No storage problems or financial restrictions. No restrictions regarding heresy either.

The good news is that the antidote to being confused is rather simple. Simple—but not easy. It demands a disciplined regimen of daily Scripture reading and then living out what is read. If a believer is relying on a Sunday sermon and perhaps a mid-week Bible teaching for his intake of the Word of God, his spiritual health level is likely comparable to someone who only eats one or two meals a week. Satan and his minions, the cheerleaders of confusion, love to step into the ring with spiritually undernourished and anemic believers—they are easy prey.

Word *deprivation* is combated by healthy Word *feeding*. That's the only way to remain steadfast and fruitful in the faith.

T. A. McMAHON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PROPHECY & POLITICAL ACTIVISM

PEACEFUL WORDS, PROVOCATIVE DEEDS

AN EXCERPT FROM
COUNTDOWN TO THE SECOND COMING

—BY DAVE HUNT

IN SPITE OF TERRORISM and looming war clouds in the Middle East, the prospect of a peace such as the world has never known seems to be a realistic hope. That the nations of the world will indeed establish an unprecedented international peace, and perhaps fairly soon, is certain, because the Bible has for thousands of years foretold a false peace in the last days.

That time of peace is prophesied, however, not with joy but with sorrow, for the prophets declared that it would precede a holocaust that would threaten the survival of all life on this planet. Why? The answer to this question comprises the entire subject matter of the Bible, which in fact prophesies the coming of two periods of global peace. The first will be realized for a time under the Antichrist, and the second will be established by the return of Jesus Christ in power and glory to rule this planet where He was so cruelly rejected and crucified.

Earth's war-weary inhabitants will greet the first period of peace ecstatically, convinced that the Millennium has dawned. And, for a time, it will appear that the world's economic, social, and ecological problems have been solved. That will, however, be a great delusion. Biblical prophets have warned that this false peace will usher in the Great Tribulation (after Christ takes His church to heaven in the "Rapture") and will culminate seven years later in the most destructive war in earth's history—Armageddon! In somber revelation, the apostle Paul declared:

When they [the world, not true Christians] shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

On the one hand, it seems incomprehensible that international peace at last attained should be the prelude to disaster. Yet what else could result from a "peace" established by Antichrist? As always, so today, the world's leaders pursue their negotiations among themselves in utter disregard for the essential role that must be played by the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. If mankind could by its own efforts establish a just and lasting peace, it would disprove the Bible—which declares that true peace can come only through Jesus Christ reigning upon earth. In fact, all such humanistic attempts are doomed by man's inherent sinfulness.

Where Are the Voices of True Peace?

Are we suggesting that the world's leaders shouldn't even attempt to achieve global peace? Of course, they must try. But those who are not Christians, driven by necessity to pursue every possible means to establish peace, don't realize the futility of their efforts. Christian political leaders, of course, are also compelled to join their secular colleagues in pursuing world peace. At the same time, they must declare solemnly and clearly to the rest of the world that the only true hope for global peace is to repent for having violated God's laws, to receive Jesus Christ as the Savior who has died for the sins of the world, and then to ask Him to come back to this earth to reign.

Where are the Christian political leaders with the courage to

do so? And if they did, who would listen? To stand fully for Christ without any compromise would end any political leader's career.

Peter explained to the first Gentile converts after Christ's resurrection that *peace* was to be *preached* through Jesus Christ (Acts 10:36). To most of today's Christians, that is a radical thought. What pastor or evangelist on radio or television today is preaching *global peace* through Jesus Christ? Paul declared that this peace was both "to you which were afar off [Gentiles] and to them that were near [Jews]" (Ephesians 2:17)—and that this peace was only possible through Christ having died for the sins of the world (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

Those who set out to establish international peace through a world government over which the Lord Jesus Christ is not invited to reign are necessarily on the side of Antichrist. They are preparing the world for his rule, whether or not they recognize or acknowledge that fact. Such is the danger that attends all earthly efforts to establish international peace and unity.

The Delusion of Ecumenism

There are only two persons who will hold absolute rule over this world. The first is the Antichrist and the second is the Lord Jesus Christ. Every person must choose between these two antagonists and their opposing kingdoms. There is no neutral ground.

Those who suggest that we can retain the idea of Christ's return to reign over Planet Earth as the *symbol* of some "spiritual truth" suitable for all religions deny the very foundation of the Christian faith. Christianity is based upon the claims that Christ made about *Himself* and the eyewitness accounts of His life, death, and resurrection as recorded in the New Testament in undeniable fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. The distinctions that make Christianity unique are irreconcilable with any other religious belief, and any attempt at ecumenical unity is a denial of biblical Christianity. Consistent with the distinctiveness of Christianity, the Bible also teaches that peace will not come to this world through the triumph of Christ's *teachings*, but only through His *personal return to reign from Jerusalem*. In fact, His teachings cannot be separated from Himself. That was the very challenge with which Jesus confronted the Jewish religious leaders in His day:

Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. (John 5:39,40)

How dare anyone think that a world ripening for judgment can be rescued by Christians working together in political/social activism with the followers of all religions, and with humanists and atheists! Scripture says repeatedly that nothing but the personal and physical return of Christ to this earth can put an end to its wickedness and suffering. Paul declared that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" as it longs for a release that can come only through "the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19-22). Paul makes very clear what this means: That only when Christians have received their immortal bodies and are glorified with Christ (verses 23-25), ruling and reigning upon this earth with Him, will earth be delivered from its turmoil and pain.

The last days before Christ's return are indeed prophesied as a period of growing evil, error, and spiritual delusion, manifested in both the world and the professing church. There are also, however,

indications in Scripture that in the last days, millions of people around the world will receive Christ as Savior and Lord, thus hastening His return. Many of them will be the most unlikely candidates for salvation—New Agers, drug addicts, prison inmates, communists, Muslims, Catholics, the poor and outcasts of society—as Christ seemed to indicate in the parable of the great supper:

Then the master of the house being angry [at those who accepted his invitation, but failed to come to the feast and tried to cover up their unwillingness with pitiful excuses] said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. (Luke 14:21-23)

Evangelicals tend to present the gospel exclusively as a remedy for personal sin and the procurement of an eternal home in heaven. They generally neglect to proclaim it as God's means of bringing peace to this troubled planet, as did the angels at the birth of Christ and as did the early church. It is the duty of every Christian political leader, whether president, ambassador, or other official, to make very clear to the entire world that all human efforts to achieve peace are in vain unless Jesus Christ is invited back to this earth to reign in individual hearts and over all nations.

Viewing Current Events Through Scripture

From the perspective of biblical prophecy, extreme caution is in order, rather than the popular euphoria, in appraising the recent introduction of new freedoms in communist nations and improved relations with the West. We dare not neglect the guidance of Scripture in evaluating current events. And if we will heed God's Word, we will see that what we have been witnessing increasingly around the world could well be leading not to the solution of mankind's problems but to history's greatest disaster.

How can we make such a definite declaration? Isn't it dangerous to attempt to correlate current events with biblical prophecy? Indeed it is. Nevertheless, if Bible prophecy concerning the "last days" is truly inspired of God, the time must come when what the prophets have written describes current developments.

The euphoria of millions freed from communist rule in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was quickly followed by the misery of even worse poverty. Government oppression was replaced by increasing lawlessness, the influx of cults, the explosion of incipient immorality, corruption, and occultism. The Eastern republics witnessed an Islamic takeover with accompanying terrorism. Is history repeating its endless cycle? Humanistic hopes for a new and better world seemingly find justification in technology's amazing promises. Yet biblical prophecy offers sober insights to those who will give heed.

William Manchester's gripping biography of Sir Winston Churchill confronts us with unpleasant and haunting reminders of Hitler—a man who came extremely close to being the Antichrist, and who deceived the entire world for a time with his promises of peace:

Thomas Jones, who had been in and out of Whitehall for a quarter century, wrote in his diary: "...all sorts of people who have met Hitler are convinced that he is a factor for peace...."

Meeting the press after he had been closeted with Hitler for an hour, Lloyd George said he regarded him as "the greatest living German...."

Arnold Toynbee...equally spellbound by the Reich chancellor, declared that he was "convinced of his sincerity in desiring peace in Europe and close friendship with England."

Winston Churchill was not deceived by Hitler, but he stood almost alone in warning the world that the Führer's real intentions would envelop Europe in war. Looking back with the clear view we now have, it seems incredible that the leading figures of the day were almost unanimous in their praise of the irrational demigod who had become Germany's leader, and in their confidence that peace was assured. The deception was well-nigh universal. Yet the rising political star whom everyone praised was a dangerous megalomaniac who would one day take his place with the most inhumane monsters in history. Moreover, he had frankly revealed his evil designs from the very beginning, in *Mein Kampf* and other writings, and in his speeches. Yet so hopeful was the world for peace at any price that almost no one was willing to face the painful truth.

So it is today. Like Churchill in England, Netanyahu is one of the few Israeli leaders who was not deceived by Arafat's promises at Oslo. He wrote: "...my party and I were virtually isolated in our warning that Arafat would not keep his word.... We were widely castigated as enemies of peace.... Our argument was that handing Gaza over to Arafat would immediately create a lush terrorist haven...." Of course, he was right.

History has proven again and again that international leaders can be both mistaken and misunderstood. Key events can be badly misconstrued. Assurances of peace and security can seem never more certain than when the world, in fact, is teetering on the very brink of disaster. On the other hand, the worldwide terrorism still unchecked despite another Gulf War...and continuing hopelessness in Israel, could very well be the necessary catalyst to bring about the prophesied false peace. The unforgettable statement by Tajikistan's ambassador to the UN at the UN's emergency session in the wake of the devastation on September 11, 2001, may well be prophetic: "Nothing else in history or even conceivable could possibly unite the world as this event." [Except, perhaps, another national or international cataclysm which will galvanize political support for the globalist agenda to establish a New World Order.]

Unfortunately, truth in politics is almost impossible to uncover—which makes it all the more important that we discern what the Bible says. If ever there were a time when we needed to ask God for wisdom and seek to understand what His Word has prophesied for our own day, it is now.

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A CRITIQUE OF JONATHAN CAHN'S BOOK, *THE HARBINGER* – BY DAVE JAMES

THE HARBINGER, by Jonathan Cahn, is about a series of signs, or omens, which he believes have manifested in America beginning with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The author believes that he has discovered an ancient mystery in Isaiah 9:10-11 that “explains everything from 9/11 to the collapse of the global economy.”

The overall purpose of *The Harbinger* is to call America to repent for turning her back on God and moving away from the foundations upon which the country was built. It is also to warn of the danger of God's judgment that this represents. Not only is this a valid message but one that needs to be proclaimed.

However, because of serious flaws throughout the book, the potential dangers may well outweigh the benefits. Many of the author's views and ideas as presented in *The Harbinger* are misguided, having both significant exegetical and theological problems. Additionally, the book could well leave its readers with serious misunderstandings about how to appropriately interpret and apply the Word of God. Not only does *The Harbinger* fail to reveal a mystery in Isaiah 9:10, but in spite of the much-needed call to repentance, the book presents a danger to believers and unbelievers alike.

The heart of a biblical hermeneutic is the commitment to understanding the literary context of a passage. This is where Cahn's thesis first runs into trouble. Nothing in the context gives any indication that either Isaiah or the Lord intended for Isaiah 9:10 to be understood as having to do with anything other than the Northern Kingdom in the eighth century B.C.

Even though categorized as “fiction,” the story is prefaced by: “What you are about to read is presented in the form of a story, but what is contained within the story is real.” In other words, the book conveys what Cahn considers to be biblically accurate and historically factual. However, the line between what is fact and what is fiction is not at all clear.

In *The Harbinger*, the nine seals are given over a period of time to journalist Nouriel Kaplan by a mysterious figure identified only as “the prophet.” Kaplan and the prophet are the primary characters in the book, along with a third, lesser character, Ana Goren, a Manhattan publishing executive to whom Kaplan tells the story of his encounters with the prophet.

The author denies that he is arguing for a direct connection between Israel and America....Yet in multiple places, the book gives the very clear impression that these are more than simply parallels and that a direct connection does exist. Based on what is clearly stated in the book, it is difficult to conclude that this is not precisely what Cahn intended to convey all the time. The following are just a few of numerous examples [from the book]:

[Ana Goren] “How could an ancient mystery have anything to do with September 11?”

[Nouriel Kaplan] “*An ancient mystery behind everything* from 9/11 to the economy...to the housing boom...to the war in Iraq...to the collapse of Wall Street. *Everything in precise detail.*”

[The Prophet] “The Assyrians are the fathers of terrorism, and those who mercilessly pointed out the calamity on 9/11 were their spiritual children, *another link to the mystery joining America to ancient Israel.*”

[Kaplan] “So if the ancient mystery is *joined to America*, then somehow 9/11 has to be linked to the words ‘We will rebuild.’”

[The Prophet] “Well done, Nouriel. So what would we expect to find in Washington DC?”

[Kaplan] “Some link between this city and the ancient vow,” I said. “Somehow *Isaiah 9:10 has to be connected to Washington DC.*”

[The Prophet] “And all referring to America's campaign to defy the calamity of 9/11, as *he links it all to the judgment of ancient Israel.*”

[The Prophet] “Solomon was the king of Israel. Washington was the first president of the United States. There was something in *the linking of ancient Israel and America*, as with all the other mysteries.”

Cahn's belief in a direct *prophetic* link between Isaiah 9:10 and the United States could not be more clear. As such, the author's theory about this direct connection unambiguously forms the “factual” basis for the entire story.

[Referring to the third harbinger, Dave James contrasts Isaiah's use of the term “bricks” (Isaiah 9:10) with what fell from buildings when the World Trade Centers collapsed. Fallen bricks meant the Northern Kingdom lay in ruins. However, as tragic as they were, the 9/11 attacks involved only a few buildings, not an entire city, let alone the entire nation. And although there had been an airport security breach, this was not a breach of America's military defenses, even when the attack on the Pentagon is considered. The pattern of forcing current events into the Isaiah 9:10 prophecy continues with the author's discussion of the bricks themselves. The fallen bricks in ancient Israel were the ruins of a destroyed city, while fallen bricks were only incidental in the World Trade Center attacks.

[The author] rightly notes that national repentance can take place only at a personal level, when people individually turn to God. Because of this, chapter 21, “Eternity,” is arguably the most important one in the book. The challenge to be spiritually prepared for the day of judgment is quite clear as The Prophet states: “And no one is exempt. Each must stand before Him.”

Unfortunately, there are some issues that diminish the impact this chapter could have. A believer, or even an unbeliever who... understands the gospel, would understand what the author is talking about. However, there are a few things that either are not stated, are unclear, or require the reader to “connect the dots”—a difficult task without some prior exposure to Christianity....Cahn describes what someone must do to be saved: [The prophet:] “By receiving... by letting go...by letting the old life end and a new one begin. By choosing...by opening your heart to receive that which is beyond containing—the presence...the mercy...the forgiveness...the cleansing...the unending love of God.”

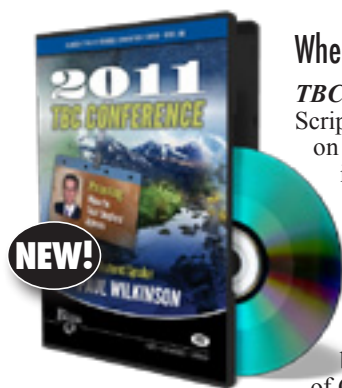
However, it is never explained that it is by simple faith that one “receives, lets go, chooses, or opens one's heart.” Neither faith in Christ, nor believing in Christ, nor trusting in Christ for one's salvation is ever discussed. Someone with no biblical background would not understand what the prophet means when he speaks of partaking in the infinite sacrifice. Unfortunately, the gospel is almost obscured in the midst of the many words, while things that could have made it much more clear are missing.

This page is a condensed excerpt. You may access the full version of Dave James' critique at our new “Extra” landing page:

<http://www.thebereancall.org/extra>

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When the Chief Shepherd Appears

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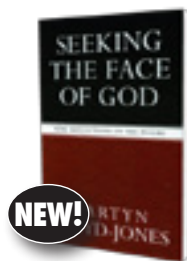
Knapp—Which hymn writer was exiled for his faith in Christ? Who wrote one of our favorite hymns while a permanent invalid? Which famous hymn writer was the youngest of 18 children? In *Who Wrote Our Hymns?* you will find the inspiring stories of Frances R. Havergal, John N. Darby, John Newton, Philip P. Bliss, and 26 more writers of beloved hymns. You will likely gain a deeper

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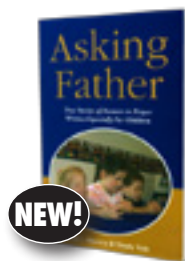
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