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U.S. Losing Its Primacy

At a recent economic gathering, there was a rising concern that the U.S. is retreating from global leadership.

By Gregory Dullum

At one time Great Britain was the greatest nation on earth. It ruled the seas with a powerful navy and had colonies all around the globe so that it was said, "The sun never sets on the British Empire."

Today Britain is one of many European nations. It retains a Commonwealth of nations in alliance, but it no longer is the world's superpower that it once was. It has lost its greatness.

Following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union joined Britain to form three world superpowers. In the 1960s, as Britain lost its colonies and slipped from prominence, the U.S. and Soviet Union continued to grow stronger, battling each other in a "cold war."

In 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed and the Eastern European nations were freed from the tyranny of Soviet domination. Russia didn't disappear completely, but it faded from the limelight as a world superpower.

U.S. Lone Superpower

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the world was left with one lone superpower: the United States. And now, there are signs that the U.S. is going the way of Russia, Britain, and all great nations of the past, including France, Spain, Rome, Greece, Babylon and Egypt. We are losing our primacy! We will soon no longer be a world superpower.

At a recent global economic gathering in Washington, D.C., world leaders expressed concern that the U.S. is retreating from its global leadership role.

Global Leaders Concerned

The New York Times reported, "some in Washington and around the world see the United States government so bitterly divided that it is on the verge



NAPS photo

The United States is losing its primacy in the world as it retreats from its economic leadership position.

of ceding the global economic stage it built at the end of World War II and has largely directed ever since.

"It's almost handing over legitimacy to the rising powers," Arvind Subramanian, the chief economic adviser to the government of India, said of the United States in an interview on Friday [April 17]. "People can't be too public about these things, but I would argue this is the single most important issue of these spring meetings."

"Other officials attending the meetings [of the International Money Fund and the World Bank] this week, speaking on the condition of anonymity, agreed that the role of the United States around the world was at the top of their concerns."

"Washington's retreat is not so much by intent, Mr. Subramanian said, but a result of dysfunction and a lack of resources to project economic power the way it once did. Because of tight budgets and competing financial demands, the United States is less able to maintain its economic power..."

"I've been searching for a word to describe it, and the one I use is 'withdrawal,' best I can come up with," said Edwin M. Truman, a former Obama Treasury official now with the Peterson Institute for International Economics. "We're withdrawing from the central place we held on the international stage...."

"This is really about a crossroads for America and its leadership for the world," said Representative Dave G. Reichert, Republican of Washington. "We set the tone, we set the path for the global economy by being leaders. And if we don't, other countries step in...."

"The United States has lost its way and is rapidly forfeiting claims to global financial, economic, political and moral leadership," Kevin Rafferty, a former World Bank official, wrote recently in two leading English-language newspapers in Asia. He blamed the White House: "Not for the first time, Obama has shown he can talk eloquently, but does not have a political clue how to get things done" ("At Global Economic Gathering, U.S. Primacy Is Seen as Ebbing" by Jonathan Weisman, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, April 17, 2015, pp. 1-4).

Why Is This Happening?

The reason our nation is losing its primacy in the world is because we are *turning our backs on God*. More and more, Americans are *IGNORING* the Biblical instructions on *how to live* and are *ENDORsing SIN as a way of life!*

If we *OBEY* God, we will be blessed financially: "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will

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set you high above the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:...

"The LORD will open to you His good treasure... You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and be careful to observe them" (Deut. 28:1-2, 12-13).

However, if we DISOBEY God, we will LOSE our *high position!* "The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. And they shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever" (vv. 43-46).

The people of the United States are Israelites! They are descended from the tribe of Manasseh. The blessings and cursings listed in Deuteronomy 28 are *binding* upon Americans TODAY! We have experienced the BLESSINGS of this chapter and we are now seeing the CURSES coming because we are *disobeying God!*

Break the Pride of Our Power

Leviticus 26 is a similar chapter describing blessings and cursings. In this chapter, God promises, "I will break the pride of your power" (v. 19).

Know Your Bible

By Charles Nenninger

- How many people died of a plague when the Israelites joined unto Baal of Peor (Num. 25:9)?
- Who became the leader of the Israelites after Moses?
- What feast day is on the first day of the seventh month?
- Which two tribes did not cross over the Jordan (Num. 32:1-5)?
- What two adults made it into the land of Canaan all the way from Egypt (Num. 32:11-12)?

(Answers on page 5)

Several times, Mr. Subramanian mentioned the U.S. failing to maintain its global economic POWER.

We are seeing prophecy fulfilled before our very eyes! If America continues to disobey God, it will be DESTROYED!

National Captivity Coming

America is going down! As our people sink deeper and deeper into sin, having less and less regard for God and his ways, we will see more and more of the curses mentioned in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

Ultimately, God will send this nation into captivity: "I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.... The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them..." (Lev. 26:33-34, 43).

Americans will be taken captive by a conquering nation (most likely a coming revival of the Holy Roman Empire) and sold as slaves to various nations (Deut. 28:62-68).

God will not forsake these prisoner slaves! He promises, "Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God" (Lev. 26:44).

One of the first things Christ will do when He returns is free the captives and bring them to the land of Israel (Isa. 10:21-23, 11:11-12, 16, 27:12-13; Jer. 12:15-17, 16:14-15).

A Remnant Will Survive

The Bible speaks of just a "remnant" coming out of captivity (Ezek. 6:8, 14:22). There are indications that only 10 percent of the American population will survive (Isa. 6:11-13, Amos 5:2-3).

Many people will die in the war, famine, pestilence and captivity that are coming (Ezek. 5:12-13)!

We Can Escape

We can escape the horrors to come. How? After the LORD told the prophet Amos that only 10 percent will survive (Amos 5:3), He said in the next verse, "For thus says the LORD to the House of Israel: Seek Me and live" (v. 4).

If we seek God and live his way NOW, we will be *protected* in the evil days to come. "The LORD will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble" (Ps. 9:9). The GREATEST time of trouble

will be the time of "Jacob's trouble" when Americans (who are descended from Jacob through Joseph and Manasseh) will be taken captive (Jer. 30:3-7).

We don't have to go into captivity! God can take us to a place of safety for which we yearn (Ps. 12:5). He will hide us in a secret place: "You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion [margin: shelter] from the strife of tongues" (Ps. 31:20).

A portion of God's TRUE church will be taken to a place of safety as we reach the last 3-1/2 years of man's misrule of this planet. When Satan knows he has but a short time, he will try to destroy the church, but God will protect a portion: "But the woman [church] was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place [ONE specific place—NOT many places], where she is nourished [spiritually fed—taught and trained] for a time, times and half a time [3-1/2 years], from the presence of the serpent" (Rev. 12:14).

Not everyone in the greater Church of God will be protected! When Satan sees he can't get at those in the place of safety, he "went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17).

Jesus Christ told the "Philadelphian" church—one of the church eras that will exist when He returns, "Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world [the great tribulation], to test those who dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

We don't have to die in the war, famine, pestilence and captivity! We have been offered an escape through a place of safety. Seek the LORD and live!

The SABBATH SCOOP

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Honor Your Father and Your Mother

What does it mean to honor our parents? Must we love them? What if they are not in the church or are dead?

By Gregory Dullum

Part 9

The fifth commandment is special in at least three ways.

1. Eight of the 10 Commandments are “negative” commandments—they tell us what NOT to do. Only two commandments are “positive.” Last month we looked at the first positive commandment—the fourth: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” The fifth commandment is the other positive commandment—telling us to DO SOMETHING!

2. The fifth commandment is a transitional commandment. The first four commandments tell us how to love God. Beginning with the fifth, the focus changes, and we are now being taught how to love our fellow man. However, since God is our spiritual Father, this commandment applies to Him as well.

“The command to honor parents concludes the first five commandments, tying the commandments dealing with God to those establishing our responsibilities to other people. Honoring parents not only helps us to honor God, it also helps us to honor other people” (*The Ten Commandments* by Dr. Laura Schlessinger and Rabbi Stewart Vogel, 1998, p. 170).

3. This commandment is the only one that promises a BLESSING for keeping it. The Apostle Paul wrote of this commandment: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise” (Eph. 6:1-2).

What is that PROMISE? Let’s go back and read it from God’s own lips.

The Fifth Commandment

The fifth commandment is this: “Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you” (Ex. 20:12).

The command is not to LOVE our parents, or to OBEY them, but to HONOR them.

Why aren’t we commanded to LOVE them? “The interpersonal dynamics between parent and child are filled with conflicts. Sometimes the parent and child come out of the adolescent and early adult years with a strong bond of attachment and love. Other times they barely escape with a relationship intact. Sometimes too much has transpired for the child to love the parent. God, strangers, and neighbors do not place the same ego demands upon us that parents do. Just ask any sixty-year-old who



NAPS photo

A chain of command exists from God the Father to Christ to husbands, to wives and down to children. Honoring parents helps us to honor other people and ultimately, to honor God.

always feels like a child when in the presence of his parent....

“The commandment to honor parents was given to ensure that the elderly, although they may not feel wanted by family or society, are still given their appropriate reward.

“We are commanded to honor parents because it is the best way to compensate for the tension-filled parent-child relationship. It can serve as the thin thread that keeps the parent and child attached” (Schlessinger and Vogel, p. 155).

Why aren’t we commanded to OBEY our parents? Because sometimes parents give us *improper* instructions. Paul’s instruction, quoted earlier, contained the caveat, “Children, obey your parents IN THE LORD.” Children should obey parents if the parental commands are in sync with God’s laws. However, if children must choose between obeying their parents or obeying God, they should choose (as much as possible) to obey God (Acts 5:29). It is easier for children to obey God (instead of their parents) when the children themselves become adults.

Defining Honor

What does it mean to honor someone? The dictionary defines the verb as: to hold in respect, esteem; to show respect for (“Honor,” *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1992, p. 868). “To HOLD in respect” indicates a *mental decision* we make about our parents. “To SHOW respect” indicates some *action to be taken*. Honor begins with an in-

active ATTITUDE, but it doesn’t end there.

Gary Smalley and John Trent, in their 1987 book, *The Gift of Honor*, mention both ATTITUDE and ACTION. They state that love makes us go beyond our attitude of honor and act: “Honor is a decision we make to place high value, worth, and importance on another person by viewing him or her as a priceless gift and granting him or her a position in our lives worthy of great respect; and Love involves putting that decision into action” (p. 16).

This commandment requires *action*. It demands that we *do something*. Can we remember the last thing we did to honor our parents?

Honor is to treat people in such a way that *they feel special*. If we never call, write, e-mail or visit our parents, how do THEY know we honor them?

Ways to Honor Parents

Parents of different ages were asked what could their children do—or what have they done—to make them feel honored. Here are their replies:

“1. On a day other than Mother of Father’s Day, it would mean so much to get a card or letter from our children letting us know they are thinking of us.

“2. The greatest present I ever received from my son was a cassette tape that looked back on several specific things I had done for him in the past.

“3. Even though it’s difficult for me to do, my daughter always makes a point of hugging me when we get together.

“4. As a single mom, when my (school-age) children do chores without being asked, or additional chores, I feel honored.

“5. It honors me to see my children reaching out to help others who have been less fortunate than they.

“6. I feel honored and humbled when my daughter asks my advice on struggles and needs in her life.

“7. We appreciate the way our children tell us the truth, even when it means disagreeing with us or expressing an opinion different from ours.

“8. We know our children are praying for us every day and that honors us.

“9. When I see my daughter seeking after God, I can’t think of anything that brings me more honor.

“10. When my children were in their

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teenage years, they came to us to talk about ‘taboo’ areas like drinking, sex, and drugs.

“11. My son and I have often disagreed over the years, but it means so much that we’ve cleared up past hurts.

“12. Receiving a special thank you after we’ve babysat the grandchildren is a real encouragement.

“13. I think the greatest way my daughter honored me was to name her daughter after me.

“14. When I see my (school-age) children do their best in school or on different projects, it honors me.

“15. A while ago, I learned from a neighbor that my son had praised me and actually defended me in front of several people when I wasn’t present.

“16. My son’s admitting he was wrong in the way he was treating his wife and agreeing to get marriage counseling was something for which I’ll always be thankful.

“17. When my children let me spend time with the grandchildren, I feel honored.

“18. Although he knew he didn’t have to, my nineteen-year-old son helped out by paying some of the grocery and rent costs when we were having a rough time making ends meet.

“19. At my husband’s funeral, I cried when my two sons and one daughter came up to me and told me they would love and take care of me as I grew older.

“20. Watching the way my son treats his wife and children, and then hearing him say he learned it from us, is something that is more valuable than any present he could give me” (Smalley and Trent, pp. 43-44).

What If Our Parents Are Dead?

My mother died 30 years ago next month; my father died four years ago in April, so both of my parents are now deceased. Many reading this article are in the same boat. If our parents are dead, are we excused from this commandment? No. The commandment does not say, “Honor your father and mother *as long as they are alive*.” How can we honor them if they are dead?

Here are three ways (and you may be able to think of more):

1. Visit their graves. We can make an effort to visit the graves of our parents. What will they think when they rise in a resurrection and happen to ask if we ever visited their graves? Will our answer make them feel honored or dishonored? Although my parents are buried hundreds



photo by Gregory Dullum

Flowers placed upon a grave are one way we can honor our parents. These were placed upon my father’s grave following his funeral.

of miles away from where we now live, we have visited both of their graves.

2. Flowers can be placed on graves. Hulda Staples mentions this being an act of honor in her poem, “Attention Husband” in her 1988 book, *Slices of Life*:

*Mankind still waits till death has come
To heap the grave with flowers
Accord to those you dearly love
The honor that is ours.*

The dead know nothing—they don’t know if flowers are placed atop their graves (Eccles. 9:5, 10). But our parents will rise in a resurrection, and we may be asked about this. Will our answer make them feel honored?

Once, when our firstborn daughter was a little girl, we visited my mother’s grave. Our daughter picked a handful of bright yellow dandelions nearby and placed them on my mother’s grave marker. It was a nice sentiment. Now, 30 have passed and those dandelions are long gone, as would be any other flowers we had placed atop her grave. There is a BETTER way to show honor than visits and flowers.

3. What will mean more to my Mom and Dad than any visits—or flowers—will be if we *hang in there* and stay TRUE TO GOD—and BE THERE when *they are resurrected*. Mom died in the faith, so she will rise when Christ returns. If we don’t give up and lose out on salvation, we will rise *with her* to meet Christ in the air (1 Thes. 4:15-17).

Dad may not be resurrected until the second resurrection. But even at that time, he will be glad to see his children have made it into the Kingdom of God and are not lost forever. I am convinced that one of the first things our parents will do when they are resurrected will be

to look for us. Being there for them—and not giving up—is the GREATEST thing we can do to honor our dead parents. This is affirmed by some of the parent comments we have already mentioned (see numbers 3, 5, 8 and 9).

This also is affirmed by Scripture: “The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice” (Prov. 23:24-25).

What does it mean to be righteous? Ps. 119:172 tells us, “For all your commandments are righteousness.” We must keep all of God’s commandments. How can we be wise children? “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). We must fear (love, honor and respect) God!

Parents Not in the Church

What if our parents are not in the church? What if they are antagonistic toward the church and want us to leave?

My father came to church but quit after six years in 1972. As time went on, he became antagonistic. During my senior year in high school, he often “preached” to me about things he thought were wrong in the church and tried to persuade me to leave.

After Mom died in 1985 and the estate was settled, Dad wrote my three siblings and me a letter. He told us what he expected to be worth financially when he died. Each of us kids was entitled to a fourth of his estate—but *only* if we QUIT THE CHURCH. If we didn’t leave, he would give our share to the Salvation Army.

Fortunately, Dad didn’t follow through

on this threat. He was happy when we left the Worldwide Church of God in 1995. I don't think he realized at the time that we left because church leadership changed the doctrines to become more like the mainstream churches of the world. It took Dad a while to realize we kids actually *continued to believe as we always had*. When Dad died in 2011, he left us kids our full inheritance and didn't hold our religious beliefs against us.

How do we, in the Church of God, honor our parents who don't agree with our beliefs? What if our parents want us to eat pork with them, or celebrate Christmas and Easter with them? Must we *violate our principles* to SHOW THEM HONOR?

In rare instances our parents may NOT be *honorable people*. They may be criminals, drug addicts or child abusers. In these cases it is important to hold the OFFICE of parent in respect, even if it's difficult to respect the PERSON in that office.

God doesn't want us to disobey Him in order to please our parents. There are some things we can do that will *honor our parents WITHOUT disobeying God*.

1. We can do some of the 20 things we have already mentioned.

2. We can *stay with the truth* and strive to live a *righteous* life. Our parents may not appreciate our belief system *at this time*, but someday God will open their minds. Someday they will be called. And when they are, they will come looking for us. Will we be there for them?

Someday our unconverted parents will utter these words: "My son [or daughter], if your heart is wise, my heart will rejoice—indeed, I myself; yes, my innermost being will rejoice when your lips speak right things" (Prov. 23:15-16). "Will rejoice" is *future tense*. Our parents may not say these words TODAY. But they will SOME DAY.

Promise of Long Life

The fifth commandment ends with the promise, "that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you."

First, there is a promise that *our days may be long*. Showing honor to parents and others in authority is one way to *prolong our physical lives*. For the most part, parents desire the best for their children and give them good advice that will make their lives better (Luke 11:11-13). Honoring these parents—following their good advice—will help ensure a long, good life. This promise still holds true today!

If we disrespect our parents and others in authority, we have a greater chance of getting involved in activities that will harm us: smoking, excessive drinking, drug abuse and crime.

Promise of Land

Second, there is a promise that those long days would be *in a land that God has given us*. To the ancient Israelites, this meant the Promised Land. We today, live in a blessed land given to us by God because of promises made to Abraham, Issac, Jacob and Joseph (Gen. 17:4-7, 16, 22:17-18, 24:60, 27:28-29, 28:3-4, 14-15, 35:10-11, 48:3-5, 16-20, 49:22-26).

A nation that is disrespectful *will not last long*. It will lose touch with the moral principles upon which it was founded and spiral into depravity, losing God's blessings and causing the nation to *weaken*. Eventually it will be CONQUERED by a stronger nation. This is one of the problems in America today!

"Our culture seems bent on teaching us to dishonor and hold our parents in contempt. TV and movies are full of examples of kids being smarter than their parents and of stupid, pitiful old people. It is easy to fall for this unholiness.

"Without respect, awe, and even appropriate fear of their parents' disapproval, and all adults, and legitimate authority figures, our children become lost in the moral and emotional chaos of a *Lord of the Flies* culture, which they construct out of their untempered desires and impulses, immature decisions, and reactions; in other words, they give in to their innate animal nature that has not yet been honed into honorable humanity by training, learning, and revering something bigger beyond themselves....

"The disastrous impact of the rebellious 1960s resulted in a make-it-up-as-you go-along view of one's obligations and responsibilities to others, where 'me' became the highest value, as well as the notion that right and wrong were subjective. This produced every child's dream: eliminating the worry about being judged and punished. The highest value became the self and its gratification, comfort, and glorification. 'Who is to say what is right and wrong?' went the mantra. 'To each his own.'

"We live in a society in which the term *self-respect* has come to mean, 'I deserve more respect than other people.'..."

"The loss of manners is a very important indicator of the disruption that has occurred in our society during the last two generations. There is no question that

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Know Your Bible Answers

- 1) 24,000. 2) Joshua. 3) Feast of Trumpets. 4) Gad & Reuben. 5) Joshua and Caleb.

Fun Fact



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS

The day was first divided into 24 equal parts that remain constant-regardless of season or position on the globe—in 1330. This system was created by monks who needed to know what time to start their morning prayers.

Witerature

Wit and wisdom to complement the truths of the Holy Bible can be found in secular writings.

Being George Washington by Glenn Beck, Candlewick Press, 2011, pp. 148-149).

Listen to Others

"[George] Washington's willingness to listen to others, including his subordinates, is what made this possible. Being humble means nothing if you don't live it every day. Plenty of bosses, for example, believe themselves to be humble but would never call in a low-level manager or secretary to take their advice about a business deal.... But Washington did. He listened to everyone—keeping good ideas and discarding the bad....

This might be one of Washington's most important lessons for us today. No one man, no matter how respected or powerful... can do it all. We all need help. We all have strengths and weaknesses and only by listening to, and working with others can we maximize the positives and minimize the negatives."

Prov. 9:9, 11:14, 12:15, 13:10, 15:22

Memory Scripture

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

—1 Tim. 5:8

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American society has lost some of the formality and etiquette that convey a sense of respect. Not only is chivalry dead, but so are simple manners....

"The loss of respect, the emphasis on 'self-respect,' and the overpowerment of children are not positive changes. These factors, and others, have contributed to the overall social decay we are experiencing" (Schlessinger and Vogel, pp. 130-132, 135-137).

Our Promised Land

Not only is there the promise of long physical life in a physical land, we in the Church of God have promised to us an eternal life (you can't get longer than that!) waiting for us in the coming Kingdom of God—a kingdom without end (Dan. 12:1-2, 2:44, 7:14)!

But to get there, we must honor our heavenly Father. We do that by changing our ways and becoming more like Him. We must repent, be baptized and live a righteous life that includes keeping these 10 commandments (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:15, 12, 16-17; Mat. 19:16-17).

Honoring Parents Honors God

By honoring our physical parents, we learn to honor our spiritual Father—God. There is a chain of command that runs from God the Father to Jesus Christ, to the husband, to the wife, and to the children (Eph. 5:22-23, 6:1; John 14:28). It is important to show honor up that chain!

There is an old Jewish story about a rabbi sitting next to an atheist on an airplane. "Every few minutes, one of the rabbi's children or grandchildren would inquire about his needs for food, drink, or comfort. The atheist commented, 'The respect your children and grandchildren show you is wonderful. Mine don't show me that respect.' The rabbi responded, 'Think about it. To my children and grandchildren, I am one step closer in a chain of tradition to the time when God spoke to the whole Jewish people on Mount Sinai. To your children and grandchildren, you are one step closer to being an ape.'..."

"Parents and their children both need to behave with the recognition that they are parts of a chain leading straight to God, the Ultimate Creator and Power of the universe, upon whom we are all dependent and grateful" (Schlessinger and Vogel, p. 133).

We shouldn't wait for Mother's Day or Father's Day to honor our parents. We should honor them *every day!*

END-TIME EVENTS

RECENT WORLD EVENTS & THEIR PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

Food Supply Affected by Bee Deaths & Bird Flu

"A prolonged and mysterious die-off of the nation's honeybees, a trend worrisome to beekeepers and to farmers who depend on the insects to pollinate their crops, apparently worsened last year.

"In an annual survey released on Wednesday [May 13] by the Bee Informed Partnership, a consortium of universities and research laboratories, about 5,000 beekeepers reported losing 42.1 percent of their colonies in the 12-month period that ended in April. That is well above the 34.2 percent loss reported for the same period in 2013 and 2014, and is the second-highest loss recorded since year-round surveys began in 2010" ("A Sharp Spike in Honeybee Deaths Deepens a Worrisome Trend" by Michael Wines, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, May 13, 2015, p. 1).

Honeybees are needed to pollinate crops. The loss of honeybees could lead to less produce and a time of famine.

Meanwhile, "Deadly avian flu viruses have affected more than 33 million turkeys, chickens and ducks in more than a dozen states since December. The toll at Center Fresh farms alone accounts for nearly 17 percent of the nation's poultry that has either been killed by bird flu or is being euthanized to prevent its spread.

"While farmers in Asia and elsewhere have had to grapple with avian flu epidemics, no farmers in the United States have ever confronted a health crisis among livestock like this one, which seemed to travel along migratory bird pathways from the Pacific Northwest to the Midwestern states. Almost every day brings confirmation by the Agriculture Department that at least another hundred thousand or so birds must be destroyed; some days the number exceeds several million" ("Egg Farms Hit Hard as Bird Flu Affects Millions of Hens" by Stephanie Strom, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, May 14, 2015, p. 1).

The loss of eggs will affect numerous areas of the food industry from fresh eggs in cartons to processed products ranging from mayonnaise to cake mixes.

Two signs that we are nearing the return of Christ are "famines" and "pesti-

lences" (Mat. 24:3, 7-8).

Washington State Suffers from Drought

"Gov. Jay Inslee declared a statewide drought emergency for Washington on Friday [May 15], with mountain snowpack at 16 percent of average and water levels in rivers and streams drying to a trickle not seen since the 1950s....

"We're seeing things happen at this time of year we just have never seen before," Mr. Inslee said in a news conference.

"But he said that unlike other drought-stricken parts of the West, especially California, the problem here in the nation's northwest corner falls primarily on agriculture and wildlife" ("Washington Governor Declares Drought Emergency" by Kirk Johnson, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, May 15, 2015, p. 1).

Drought is promised as punishment if we turn our backs on God (Deut. 28:23-24, Jer. 3:1-3). If prolonged and widely extant, drought can lead to famine, one of the signs leading up to Christ's return (Mat. 24:3, 7-8).

China Builds Islands

China is building artificial islands in South China Sea. "Pentagon officials said they were discussing sending warships into the waters that the United States asserts are international and open to passage, but that China says are within its zone of control."

"The Defense Department planning comes in response to China's accelerated efforts to build new islands in the South China Sea to bolster claims to a vastly expanded area of sovereignty, a direct challenge to the United States and other nations in the region" ("U.S. Flies Over a Chinese Project at Sea, and Beijing Objects" by Helene Cooper and Jane Perlez, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, May 22, 2015, p. 1).

China may be stretching its muscle to become part of the "kings from the east" that will attack the king of the North near Jerusalem just before the return of Christ (Rev. 16:12-16, 19:11-19).