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Halloween Has Roots in Irish Celtic New Year

A press release for an Irish beer company proclaims plainly the pagan origins of Halloween. The big question is, does it matter to anyone?

By Gregory Dullum

Art Linkletter once had a TV show and several books titled, “Kids Say the Darnedest Things.” In their innocence, children said things that caught adults off guard. From their tiny viewpoint they shed a whole new light on grown-up situations.

Sometimes we can garner the truth from the strangest places. For example, the best book I have that explains why birthdays should NOT be celebrated is a book PROMOTING birthday celebrations: *The Lore of Birthdays* by Ralph and Adelin Linton.

When it comes to this month’s celebration of Halloween, we can find much truth in a press release from an Irish beer company that is promoting its observance with a recipe and the suggestion that its beer be included in the feast. The following are the first six paragraphs of the release:

(NAPSA)—Halloween is one of the most widely celebrated holidays of the year, yet few people know about Halloween’s Irish origins.

Murphy’s Irish Stout and Murphy’s Irish Amber invite you to celebrate Halloween the Irish way this year. Halloween is rooted in Irish Celtic tradition and based on Samhain (pronounced “sow-in”) celebrations that marked the end of the harvest year and beginning of the New Year. The Celts believed that the veil between the land of the living and the recently deceased was thinnest during the midnight hour of their New Year’s Eve. It was only during that time that the dead were able to re-enter the land of the living and cause mischief by playing tricks on the living.

As the evening’s festivities would draw to a close, the Celts would enjoy a meatless feast with food taken in

from the final harvest of the season, including barm brack, the traditional holiday bread for Samhain.

Following the evening’s games and festivities, ancient Celts wore costumes and carried burning embers in carved gourds from the evening’s bonfire to ward off mischievous fairies who would try to bring the living back to the land of the dead.

The introduction of Catholicism and the immigration of large numbers of people from Ireland to the U.S. during the potato famine have transformed the Samhain holiday into what is now known as Halloween. Celebrated with many of the same events and traditions as the ancient Celts, Halloween is still a day of jack-o-lanterns, costumes, trick-or-treating...and impish mischief.

So, on Oct. 31, try something different, observe Samhain the Celtic New Year known today as Halloween—have some traditional food, such as barm brack, wash it down with an authentic Irish brew, such as Murphy’s Irish Stout or Murphy’s Irish Amber, dress in costumes and illuminate your path with a carved, lighted gourd. Join millions as they celebrate Samhain.

This press release *got the history right!* The origins of Halloween do indeed come from paganism. The press release plainly makes the point that anyone who participates in Halloween today is actually observing the pagan festival of Samhain. But, unfortunately, this press release *draws the wrong conclusion!* After explaining how everything associated with Halloween is pagan, it recommends keeping Samhain by baking barm brack and drinking Irish beer.

What is the PROPER conclusion? Does GOD want us celebrating a holiday that pagans kept?

God told the Israelites as they were



NAPS photo

Barm brack is a traditional dish eaten on Samhain (Halloween). It is accompanied here by an authentic Irish ale.

about to drive out the pagans from the Promised Land, “take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not enquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it” (Deut. 12:30-32).

The Apostle Paul further instructs the Church of God to avoid pagan practices: “And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:15-18).

It is plain to God’s people that once we know the *pagan origins* of a celebration, we should NO LONGER OBSERVE IT!

A Never-Ending Feast

Wouldn't it be nice if the Feast of Tabernacles never had to end?

By Gregory Dullum

The Feast of Tabernacles is over for another year and we're all busy getting back to the daily grind.

Last year (2014), it was particularly hard for my wife and me to leave the Feast which we kept in Jekyll Island, Ga.

About Jekyll Island

Jekyll Island is a small island in the Atlantic Ocean off the Georgia coast, just a few miles north of Florida. It is a land of golden sunshine, roaring blue ocean waves, white sand dunes and green palm trees.

To get onto the island, we drove several miles over a causeway with marshes on both sides of the road. At a toll booth, we paid a \$6 "parking fee" that helped pay for the upkeep of the island and for the development of bike and walking trails.

Some of the island was pure wilderness, but much of it had manicured landscaping that reminded my wife and me of Ambassador College in Pasadena, Calif., (where we had met).

Between the 1880s and 1942, many rich and famous people with names like Morgan and Rockefeller came to the island as members of an exclusive club. They built cottages that looked like mansions. These also reminded us of Ambassador College.

It was sunny every day of the Feast. The temperatures were in the 70s and 80s. The beaches, ocean, palm trees and our oceanside condominium reminded Marie and me of our two Feasts in Hawaii. I've told people that Jekyll Island is a lot like Hawaii, but it's a lot easier to drive to!

We couldn't see the ocean from our ground-floor condo because of a natural barrier of bushes and trees between us and the ocean. But we could open our sliding glass doors and listen to its roar. And just a short walk away was a boardwalk that went along the ocean and provided access to the beach during low tide.

We walked out on the boardwalk at

night and watched the giant red full moon rise over the ocean. It turned white as it climbed higher into the starlit sky, casting its light upon the black ocean waves. We watched the slow moving lights of ships on the horizon, and spotted a flashing beacon from the lighthouse on Saint Simon island to the north. There was always a nice cool breeze coming off the ocean at night.

On several mornings I went out on the boardwalk before sunrise. The ocean was purple and the sky was pink until the sun peeked over the horizon. Then the sky turned orange, and before long, that bright yellow ball blazed so brightly I could no longer look at it.

Laid-Back Schedule

It was so peaceful and laid back for those eight days—so refreshing compared to the daily rush of deadlines we had back home. We didn't crowd our schedule with activities, but we kept busy.

Our 36th wedding anniversary was during the Feast last year. On Sunday, Oct. 12, we took a boat tour to see dolphins frolicking in the ocean. We came upon a fishing trawler as the fishermen were throwing back fish they didn't want to keep. The boat was covered in sea gulls and hundreds flew in its wake, hoping for a free lunch.

The fishermen threw some of their catch onto our boat for us tourists to see. They were no longer alive. Marie and I pet a slimy manatee (or stingray). I pet a small shark, but Marie didn't want to touch it.

That night, Marie and I had a romantic sunset dinner for two in the grand dining room of the Jekyll Island Club Hotel. This was the dining room where all the rich and famous used to eat. It was very fancy and reminded me of the first class dining room in the movie *Titanic*.

The next day we had a family day picnic at the park next to the beautiful, new convention center. After a lunch of barbe-

cue beef and chicken sandwiches, Marie and I walked barefoot in the Atlantic Ocean for the first time.

On the following day, we took a trolley ride through the historic district, seeing many of the "cottages." We went inside one historic mansion and a church building called Faith Chapel.

As the sun set and the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles came to an end, Marie and I took a horse-drawn carriage ride through the historic district. The pumpkin-shaped carriage was pulled by a white horse. It was a fairy-tale ending to a wonderful, relaxing Feast!

We attended church services every day and heard meaningful messages about the millennium, a time when we will rule with Christ for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4-5).

Meeting People

For Marie and me, the Feast is a time to renew old friendships and make new ones. We knew very few people in Jekyll Island last year.

We renewed friendships with people we

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had met from other church areas or past Feasts, and with a few people we had not seen since college (36+ years).

Those eight days on Jekyll Island were not perfect, but they were about as perfect as one can expect. It was a *REAL foretaste* of THE WORLD TOMORROW.

I think our condo's kitchen clock said it best. For some reason, it didn't work. I put in a new battery and the hands moved a few seconds and stopped again. For those eight days, time stood still.

Hard to Leave

When we drove off the island for the final time on Friday, Oct. 17, 2014, tears came to my eyes. It was so hard to leave this wonderful millennial picture and go back to our regular lives in this world.

Besides work deadlines, heavy work loads, and problems with co-workers on the job, we were returning to a house infested with fleas, and we faced an ongoing visitation battle over our granddaughter as our daughter went through her divorce. We were scheduled to attend a court hearing the week we got back.

It was so hard to see the Feast and Eighth Day (or Last Great Day) come to an end last year.

Have you ever had that feeling?

Years ago, in the Worldwide Church of God, the last hymn we sang would usually be, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again" and a lot of people could be seen wiping tears from their eyes. They had just spent eight days living among God's people, listening to inspiring messages about the millennium, and enjoying a foretaste of that 1000-year period. It was sad to leave those good times and good friends for another year, and go our separate ways back into the world.

I have not felt so sad EVERY Feast, but there have been MANY over the years that were very difficult—very sad—to leave.



Photos by Gregory Dullum

Above: One of the "cottages" that reminded us of Ambassador College. Below: Dining room of the Jekyll Island Club Hotel reminded us of the first class dining room in the movie Titanic. Right: getting ready for our sunset carriage ride through the historical district. Opposite: A large container ship as seen from the Jekyll Island shore.



A Biblical Example

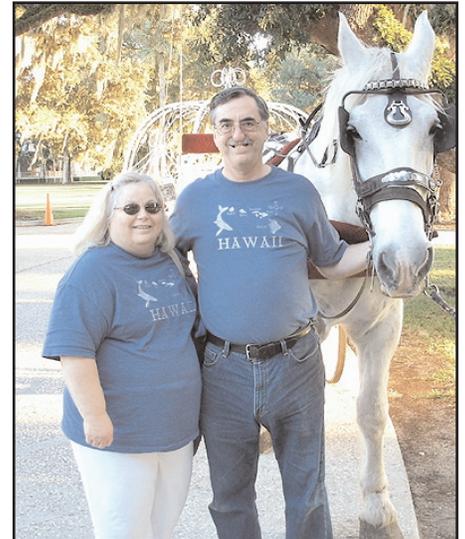
There is a Feast recorded in the Bible where no one wanted to go home.

"So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, singing to the LORD, accompanied by loud instruments. And Hezekiah gave encouragement to all the Levites who taught the good knowledge of the LORD; and they ate throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the LORD of the fathers.

"Then the whole assembly agreed to keep the feast another seven days, and they kept it another seven days with gladness. ... So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 30:21-23, 26).

This scripture speaks of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread in the spring instead of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles in the fall. But the principle is the same. If money were no object, wouldn't it be great to keep the Feast of Tabernacles another seven days? Or how about three weeks? Or four?

No matter how long we kept the Feast, we'd still be sad to see it come to an end.



When the Feast Is Fulfilled...

However, when the Feast is fulfilled in reality; and when shadow becomes substance; when God's kingdom is truly established on this earth, there will be no end! There will be no tears shed because we have to go home when it's over. There will be no going back to the world and its old ways! Our Feast will last DAY AFTER DAY *forever* into the future!

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder. And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:6-7).

The MILLENNIUM (which the Feast of Tabernacles pictures) will come to an end after 1,000 years, but it will be followed by the time of the Great White Throne Judgment (pictured by the Last Great Day), which may last another 100 years (Rev. 20:4-5, Isa. 65:20). And when those years come to an end, there will be a new heaven and a new earth made of spirit that will have no end (Rev. 21:1)!

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful' " (Rev. 21:4-5).

One reason there will be no tears when the Feast becomes reality, is because there will be no end to our Feast! The kingdom of God will be like an UNENDING FEAST!

Know Your Bible

By Charles Nenninger

1. The New Testament is a story about whom?
2. What sea was miraculously parted for the Israelites to walk through?
3. Who was swallowed up by the earth for Moses?
4. Which tribe served as priests in the land of Israel?
5. How did the Levites get their living?

(Answers on page 5)

You Shall Not Bear False Witness

Does this commandment forbid all lying—or only in court? What's so bad about telling a lie?

By Gregory Dullum
Part 13

God is a God of TRUTH (Ps. 31:5). *Every word* He speaks is TRUE. When God speaks, there are no bold-faced lies, no little white lies or broken promises. God *cannot* lie (Titus 1:2). And He wants us to become like Him (Mat. 5:48). That means *we should not lie!* We must LOVE TRUTH in order to be saved (2 Thes. 2:10).

On the other hand, Satan is a liar and deceiver. There is *no truth in him*. He invented lying. Jesus once told some Jews, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

There are TWO WAYS to live. We can live GOD’S way and be *truthful* in our speech and in our dealings with others. Or, we can live SATAN’S way, which includes *living a lie*, and uttering falsehoods and deceit.

The Ninth Commandment

The ninth commandment addresses this issue. It states, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16).

Only in Court?

What does it mean to “bear false witness?” It simply means to lie. Because the word “witness” is used, we might think this is addressing ONLY giving false testimony *in a court of law*. This is NOT the case. One commentary says this commandment refers to: “false, lying evidence, not only in a court of justice, but in the common intercourse of life, by which another’s life or character may be endangered, his interests affected, or his feelings wounded” (*A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, 1945, vol. 1, p. 360).

Three chapters later in the book of Exodus, the ninth commandment is explained in more detail: “You must not tell lies. If you are a witness in court, don’t help a wicked person by telling lies. You must do no wrong just because everyone else is doing it. If you are a witness in court, you must not ruin a fair trial. You must not tell lies just because everyone else is. If a



Photo by Gregory Dullum

“O what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!” Like strands of a web, one lie grows into two, then three, until a whole web of lies must be spun to keep the truth hidden.

poor person is in court, you must not take his side just because he is poor” (Ex. 23:1-2, *New Century Version*).

What God Thinks

God considers lying lips to be an abomination. “Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight” (Prov. 12:22).

God hates lying so much that He lists that sin twice in his list of things that are abominations to Him: “These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among the brethren” (Prov. 6:16-19).

God hates lying! We should hate it as well! “A righteous man hates lying...” (Prov. 13:5).

Why is lying so terrible?

Lies Hurt

Lying about people is considered as bad as assaulting them with a baseball bat or a gun (in today’s society). “When you lie about your neighbors, it hurts them as much as a club, a sword, or a sharp arrow” (Prov. 25:18, *NCV*).

Lying Spreads Deceit

When we speak the truth, we spread righteousness. However, if we speak lies, we spread deceit. “He who speaks truth declares righteousness, but a false witness deceit” (Prov. 12:17).

Once a lie is heard, it is often *repeated!* “A false witness shall perish, but the man who hears him will speak endlessly” (Prov. 21:28).

Liars may think they will not be caught. But it’s difficult to maintain a web of lies. Once we lie, we often have to lie more to cover up the first lie. And then, we have to remember all the lies to keep up appearances. Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) put it well when he wrote:

*O what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive.*

Lying does two things: it reveals something bad about the liar and it negatively affects those who believe the lies.

Revealing What’s In Our Heart

When we lie to others, we reveal an evil in our hearts and minds. Jesus Christ explained to his disciples, “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man...” (Mat. 15:18-20).

Jesus further stated to some Pharisees, “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ... For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Mat. 12:34, 37). Our words matter to God!

What do lying words reveal about our hearts?

“Liars hate the people they hurt, and false praise can ruin others” (Prov. 26:28, *NCV*). When we lie, we reveal a heart filled with HATE toward our neighbor.

“He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself; when he speaks kindly, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart; though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the whole congregation” (vv. 24-26).

What should our attitude be toward our neighbor? The second greatest commandment is “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). If we love our neighbor, we will not lie *to them* or *about them!*

Affecting Others Negatively

Lying negatively affects those who hear the lie. As we go through life, we gather information in order to make good decisions. “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov. 11:14). A multitude of counselors brings different levels of experience, knowledge and expertise. However, if some counselors deliberately lie, their advice is no good, and it may influence us to make bad decisions.

Governments at war know this, and disseminate “disinformation” to make their enemies think one thing while reality is something else. This causes the enemy to make bad decisions.

When we believe lies, we are “deceived.” The whole world has been deceived by Satan, and believes his lies (Rev. 12:9). Deceived people DO WRONG, but *they don’t know it!* They think they are doing right but their actions are based upon lies and deceit!

When Leaders Lie

It is especially bad when leaders lie or believe lies they are told. Such lies can move entire nations in the wrong direction!

“If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked” (Prov. 29:12). We have seen this happen within the Church of God and we have seen it happen on a national level. Lying abounds in every level of our world today! Isaiah prophesied, “No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for the truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity” (Isa. 59:4).

Lying is a ‘Gateway Sin’

Certain illegal drugs are considered gateway drugs because they lead people to use harder drugs. Lying is a sin that can lead people into committing other sins.

“Sinning basically goes hand-in-hand with lying. Few sins are committed without the perpetrator taking some comfort from the expectation that if caught, he has the opportunity to lie himself out of it. Conversely, the more you become familiar and comfortable with a lie, the easier it becomes to lie and branch out into other wrongdoing” (*The Ten Commandments* by Dr. Laura Schlessinger and Rabbi Stewart Vogel, 1998, p. 278).

Little ‘White Lies’

We earlier read a scripture that stated, “false praise can ruin others.” This is talking about “white lies.” Does God expect us to tell the truth when the truth might hurt? Many people opt instead to

tell a “white lie.” Telling a “white lie” to avoid hurting someone’s feelings is setting that person up for a HARDER FALL when the *truth is finally revealed!* It’s like setting a trap for that person that will snare him or her unexpectedly in the future! “A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet” (Prov. 29:5).

What if we can’t truthfully say something nice? Should we use the truth as a club and hit people over the head with it?

God is not a hurtful God. He is a God of love. He mixes MERCY with TRUTH, and expects us to do the same (Ps. 25:10, 57:3, 61:10, 86:15; Prov. 3:3).

Our mothers very likely taught us the old adage, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.” This is Biblical.

Several times the Bible tells us to keep our mouths shut. “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back” (Prov. 29:11). “He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction” (Prov. 13:3). “He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive” (Prov. 17:27-28).

“Honesty means that everything you say must be true, not that everything that is true must be said. ...

“Though you may be obliged to say the truth, you are not obliged to reveal all your thoughts. Silence is not deception (except in a court of law). If people truly expected perfect candor in all situations, life would become even more rude and hostile. There is the language of courtesy. There are expressions of friendliness that allow for a functioning social life. Social life would be impossible if everyone, with or without being asked, were to tell the truth to everyone else as he sees it. And that is another point, the way we see things is personal perception, and not necessarily objective reality” (Schlessinger and Vogel, pp. 287-288).

Living a Lie

In addition to speaking a lie, it’s possible to live a lie. That is what happens when we claim to be something, but our actions tell a different story.

The apostle James tells us, “If you are

BEAR FALSE WITNESS

Continued on Page 6

Know Your Bible Answers

- 1) Jesus Christ. 2) Red Sea. 3) Korah.
- 4). Levites. 5) Tithes of Israelites.

Fun Fact



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS

The name Ichabod comes from the words for there is no glory.

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, p. 107.

Always Be on Guard

“It’s kind of ironic to look at the language that [Benedict] Arnold used and compare it to [George] Washington. Arnold says that he ‘became a cripple’ in the service of his country while years later, at Newburgh, Washington tells his troops he has ‘grown gray and almost blind’ in the service of his. Similar sentiments, obviously—but Arnold used his as an excuse. *You owe me! Look at all I’ve done for you!* Washington’s utterance, meanwhile, was nothing of the sort. He was humbled and embarrassed at needing to put on glasses.

“Two men, two choices, two destinies, and one valuable lesson for today: always be on guard. It’s easy to let seemingly mundane annoyances pile up until they boil over. It’s easy to make the right decision ninety-nine straight times before greed finally gets the best of you. It’s easy to let selfishness cloud your judgment or to surround yourself with people who have ulterior motives. Always be on guard. George Washington was; Benedict Arnold was not. One is now a national hero; one is now a national disgrace.”

Luke 21:34-36; Prov. 6:16-17, 13:20

Memory Scripture

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear...”

—1 John 4:18

Bear False Witness

Continued from Page 5

wise, live a life of steady goodness, so that only good deeds will pour forth. And if you don't brag about them, then you will be truly wise! And by all means don't brag about being wise and good if you are bitter and jealous and selfish; that is the worst sort of lie" (James 3:13-14, *Living Bible*).

We need to make sure we both SPEAK the truth and LIVE the truth!

Punishment

The Bible says liars will NOT go unpunished! Two verses, very close to each other, warn us: "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape. ... A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies shall perish" (Prov. 19:5, 9).

What punishment awaits liars?

One punishment is DEATH. "Wealth that comes from telling lies vanishes like a mist and leads to death" (Prov. 21:6, NCV). The Bible is even more clear a few verses later when it plainly states, "A false witness shall perish" (v. 28).

Breaking the ninth commandment is a sin (as is transgressing any of God's laws — 1 John 3:4), and the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).

The ultimate punishment for liars is to be EXCLUDED from the kingdom of God — to *fail to be granted* ETERNAL LIFE — and to be burned up in the lake of fire.

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city [of new Jerusalem]. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie" (Rev. 22:14-15; see also Rev. 21:8).

Put Away Lying

We must put forth effort to make sure we don't lie with our LIPS or our LIVES. The Bible tells us, "Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you" (Prov. 4:24). When we open our mouths, truth should come forth! "Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:25).

If we need help doing this, we can pray this prayer of Solomon: "Two things I request of You (deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me..." (Prov. 30:7-8). Pray for God's help so that we DO NOT tell or live a lie ourselves; and and so that we are not deceived by the lies of others!



Europe Faces Uncertainty in Fight Against Terrorism

"Two days after a young Moroccan man was thwarted from an apparent plan to cause carnage on a Paris-bound express train, European officials confronted the deepening quandary of what additional steps they could take in the face of such attacks on soft targets, short of paralyzing public spaces or even more intrusive surveillance" ("Europe Facing New Uncertainty in Terrorism Fight" by Adam Nossiter, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Aug. 23, 2015, p. 1).

Bible prophecy and an understanding of history tell us there will be a 10-nation revival of the Holy Roman Empire in Europe before Christ returns (Dan. 2:40-45). Perhaps the threat of Islamic terrorists will help bring about this union, as Europe decides upon the best way to continue its fight against terrorism and make its people safe and secure.

Murder Rates Increase

"Cities across the nation are seeing a startling rise in murders after years of declines, and few places have witnessed a shift as precipitous as this city [Milwaukee]. With the summer not yet over, 104 people have been killed this year — after 86 homicides in all of 2014.

"More than 30 other cities have also reported increases in violence from a year ago. In New Orleans, 120 people had been killed by late August, compared with 98 during the same period a year earlier. In Baltimore, homicides had hit 215, up from 138 at the same point in 2014. In Washington, the toll was 105, compared with 73 a year ago. And in St. Louis, 136 people had been killed this year, a 60 percent rise from the 85 murders the city had seen by the same time last year" ("Murder Rates Rising Sharply in Many U.S. Cities" by Monica Davey and Mitch Smith, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Aug. 31, 2015, p. 1).

This is evidence that we are living in the "perilous times" of "the last days" described in 2 Tim. 3:3. Jesus' prophecy about the time of his return included these words: "And because lawlessness

will abound, the love of many will wax cold" (Mat. 24:12). Murder is a form of lawlessness that shows a lack of love.

Jesus also said the last days would be as the days of Noah (v. 37). In Noah's day, violence was everywhere (Gen. 6:5, 13).

Nuclear Deal Gets Votes

President Obama and Democratic leadership went all out to garner enough Democratic votes to push through Obama's nuclear deal with Iran ("Coordinated Strategy Brings Obama Victory on Iran Nuclear Deal" by Carl Hulse and David M. Herszenhorn, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Sept. 2, 2015, p. 1).

Opponents claim the deal will actually help Iran get nuclear weapons (see "Iran Deal a Mistake in the September 2015 issue of *The Sabbath Scoop*). A nuclear armed Iran may be part of a prophesied "king of the South" that will attack a European "king of the North" at the time of the end (Dan. 11:40).

China Plans Troop Cut

"President Xi Jinping of China announced on Thursday [Sept. 2] that he would reduce the country's military personnel by 300,000, using a parade marking 70 years since the end of World War II to present the People's Liberation Army as a force for peace and regional stability.

"The Chinese military has more than two million members, and Mr. Xi has embarked on an accelerated modernization of the armed forces, which would shift spending from the traditional land forces to more advanced sea and air forces, which require fewer but better trained personnel" ("China Announces Cuts of 300,000 Troops at Military Parade Showing Its Might" by Edward Wong, Jane Perlez and Chris Buckley, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Sept. 2, 2015, p. 1).

Just before Christ returns, "kings from the east" will attack the king of the North near Jerusalem with an army numbering 200 million (Dan. 11:40-44, Rev. 9:13-16, 16:12-16). China may be part of the kings from the east.