

Publishing Editor's column

A YEAR ago I remarked in this column that the moving of the world into what was widely regarded as a new millennium had passed off without incident. The world was a relatively peaceful place in January 2000, with the nations of the Western world enjoying unprecedented prosperity, and the pundits looking forward to a century of continued technological development. In truth, of course, 1 January 2000 was a man-made date, almost certainly bearing no significance in God's timetable of things.

Though there was no reason to suppose that 1 January 2001 would be any more significant a date than 1 January 2000, the world in January 2001 is significantly different from what it was a year earlier. After a decade of relative peace, the Middle East has become a volatile place again. The world has been forcibly reminded that the presence of Israel in the Middle East means that there can be no lasting peace achieved by man's efforts. Jerusalem, for many centuries a small, insignificant, hilltop city, now threatens to be the cause of a conflict that will affect the whole world, just as the prophets of God said it would many years ago.

The last decade has also been a decade of economic growth for the USA, and with it other nations of the Western world. But the indications are that this is coming to an end. Recession now looms. There is nothing new in this, but there are two significant differences since the last recession. Firstly, many more people now hold shares, and secondly, computer technology makes it much easier and quicker to get rid of them. The result could be a spectacular crash in the stock market and financial ruin for many. Linking things together, a Middle East crisis, threatening oil supplies, could trigger off or accentuate a collapse. The way world attention has been focused on the Middle East, in accordance with Bible prophecy, strengthens our faith in the coming Kingdom. Yet there is today so much in this life we can enjoy (if we live in the prosperous Western world, of course) that our appreciation of the gospel of the Kingdom is dulled. Perhaps an economic collapse would be good for us spiritually, helping us to focus more readily on the things that really matter.

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