ARMAGEDDON
AND BEYOND

Armageddon and Beyond

by Richard F. Ames

Mankind is developing newer and more frightening technologies with which to destroy itself, while political and social tensions increase around the world. Will the years just ahead of us bring worldwide nuclear devastation, or usher in an era of lasting peace?

Will the prophesied "Battle of Armageddon" soon bring destruction and death to our planet? What will "Armageddon" mean to you and your loved ones? And what will come afterward?

Your Bible reveals a frightening time ahead—but there is ultimate hope! Read on, to learn the amazing truth!

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In the first decade of the 21st century, most of us realize we live in a very dangerous world. It was just six decades ago that a new weapon of unprecedented capacity was first unleashed, when the United States dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan on August 6 and 9, 1945. A new era of mass destruction had begun.

At the end of World War II, General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, accepted Japan's unconditional surrender. Aboard the battleship U.S.S. Missouri, General MacArthur summarized the danger and the choice facing humanity in this new era:

> "Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be the way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blocks out this alternative. ***We have had our last chance.*** If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, ***our Armageddon will be at our door***. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence [renewal] and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh."

Human beings will continue to seek a way to peace. But without acknowledging the Creator God and His supreme rulership over planet Earth, nations will ultimately fail. The Apostle Paul nearly

2,000 years ago wrote of humanity's violent and anti-God tendencies: "Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:15–18).

As we will see, Bible prophecy reveals that World War III is on the horizon. The greatest war in human history will explode in the Middle East. Nations will use their military power to cause massive death and destruction. They will gather in northern Israel for the climactic battle your Bible calls "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14). Most commentators refer to this awesome event as "Armageddon," "the final battle between good and evil." Who will win? Will humanity survive? Your Bible gives us the answer—and the good news that goes beyond today's global threats to all life on our planet. You need to understand the sequence of prophetic events, and to prepare for them physically and spiritually.

Our Nuclear Era

Is there any current danger of nuclear war? Perhaps international treaties have calmed Cold War fears; since 1968, more than 180 nations have signed the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. But several nuclear nations have not signed the treaty, and many that have signed are believed to be violating its provisions. Jesus prophesied of these dangerous times in which we live: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21–22).

Christ was not speaking of spiritual salvation. He was speaking of the potential of human annihilation—of cosmocide—the death of all life on planet Earth! This danger is recognized not just by Bible students, but by respected scientists. *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* monitors the dangers of living in this nuclear age, and expresses that danger with its "Doomsday Clock." The closer the hands are to midnight, the closer the scientists perceive humanity has come to nuclear devastation. On January 17, 2007, the *Bulletin* moved the minute hand of the clock to five minutes before midnight, announcing, "We stand at the brink of a ***second nuclear age***. Not since the first atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has the world faced such perilous choices."

An earlier *Bulletin* press release described the scope of just two nations' nuclear arsenals: "Between them, Russia and the United States still have upwards of 30,000 nuclear weapons—strategic and tactical—in various states of readiness. Nine years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States and Russia collectively have some ***7,000 warheads ready to be fired with less than 15 minutes notice.***" Humanity, now, has the tools to destroy itself with very little warning. Will we bring about our own destruction? Will Armageddon play a role in humanity's downfall?

Perhaps we will never know just how close we have come to mistakes that might have precipitated a nuclear conflagration. Today, at least nine nations are known to possess nuclear weapons. Two of these are *by far* the world's largest nuclear powers. The United States—the only nation that has used nuclear weapons against another—has more than 10,000 nuclear warheads in its stockpile, down from the more than 31,000 it held in 1966. The United States is currently the only nation known to have some of its nuclear weapons deployed outside its own borders, with as many as 150 warheads located at ten airbases in seven NATO countries. The vast majority of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, however, is found across 14 states, with New Mexico, Georgia, Washington, Nevada and North Dakota accounting for about 70 percent of the total, according to a National Resource Defense Council report, *Taking Stock: Worldwide Nuclear Deployments*.

Russia is estimated to have at least 15,000 active nuclear warheads—down from the more than 40,000 the Soviet Union had deployed in 1986. At its peak, the Soviet nuclear arsenal stretched across hundreds of locations in Eastern Europe and to 14 of the 15 Soviet republics. Today, those warheads have reportedly been consolidated to just 90 sites in Russia.

By comparison, France's estimated 450 nuclear warheads in four locations, China's 200–400 in 20 locations, and the United Kingdom's nearly 200 may not seem like much. As the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* pointed out in its "Five Minutes to Midnight" report in January 2007, if the U.S. and Russia each agreed to dismantle one warhead a day for the next 25 years, they would still possess more nuclear weapons than all the other nuclear nations combined.

Israel, India and Pakistan possess an unknown number of nuclear weapons. Estimates regarding the size of Israel's nuclear arsenal vary

from about 75 to as many as 200. India and Pakistan are thought to have fewer than 50 each. Are these nations' small arsenals a serious threat? Joseph Biden, U.S. senator from Delaware, put the Pakistan situation into perspective in a speech to students at St. Anselm College in New Hampshire on November 8, 2007: "It is hard to imagine a greater nightmare for America than the world's second-largest Muslim nation becoming a failed state in fundamentalist hands, with an arsenal of nuclear weapons and a population larger than those of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and North Korea combined."

Other nations are at the brink of widespread nuclear development. In October 2006, calling it a "historic event that brought happiness to our military and our people," the North Korean news agency KCNA said North Korea's nuclear weapon capability would maintain "peace and stability" in the region, and was "a great leap forward in the building of a great prosperous, powerful socialist nation." Since North Korea's Rodong missiles can deliver a warhead at a distance up to 800 miles, this nuclear development unsettled many Asian nations.

Iran is perhaps the most noteworthy of the nations known to be developing nuclear technology, but it is far from alone. Mohammed El Baradei, the International Atomic Energy Agency's director general, estimated that another 20 to 30 countries possess the capability, if not the intent, to pursue nuclear weapons technology.

When we think about nuclear weapons' devastating capabilities, we may have in mind the explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. But we need to understand that today's "strategic warheads" are far more deadly than the weapons that were burned into our consciousness at the end of World War II. At Hiroshima, a 15–kiloton bomb obliterated a city and killed 100,000 people. Today's smaller "strategic" nuclear warheads typically measure about 200 kilotons, and even one-megaton bombs have been built.

What would it be like for your city to be the target of a one-megaton nuclear bomb? After a nuclear explosion's blast wave, its pulse of heat radiation and its intense release of X-rays, it triggers powerful firestorms in its wake. How many people would be killed by just one such bomb? Dr. Alan F. Phillips describes it this way, "The estimates for a city of one million or two million struck by a single one-megaton bomb are that around one third of the inhabitants would be killed instantly or fatally injured, one third seriously injured, and the rest uninjured or only slightly injured. That number

Nuclear Warheads Worldwide
*Estimated
Russia 15,000
United States 10,000
France 450
China 200-400
United Kingdom 200
Israel 75-200
India 50
Pakistan 50
North Korea Unknown

of injured, if they could be distributed throughout the hospitals of North America, would occupy something like one third of the total number of beds; and of course no hospital can deal adequately with such an influx of urgent cases within a few days" (*Position Paper*, Physicians for Global Survival, Canada, October 1995).

At least one nuclear accident, in 1986, illustrates the suffering and danger resulting from extensive radiation. Filmmaker Maryann de Leo wrote about her visit to the desolate Ukrainian town of Pripyat, which was permanently evacuated after the Chernobyl nuclear reactor disaster in 1986: "On a bright Sunday morning in Kiev, outside the Minskaia metro station and in front of a Ukrainian McDonald's, a streamlined yellow tour bus idles its engine. The driver waits for passengers heading into the exclusion zone, a radioactive no-man's-land created two decades ago by the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Soon about 20 people, mostly Ukrainians and Russians, gather near the bus. Two young, dark-haired men hand out white and blue radiation hazmat suits, yellow plastic slickers, and bottles of water. One of the day-trippers is Alex, born and raised in Pripyat until he was 10. Now 30, he is part of a virtual community of mostly young people who once lived in Pripyat, the forgotten city that was built in the 1970s for workers at the Chernobyl nuclear power station less than two miles away. At the time, Pripyat was called the City of the Future. Instead it was abandoned April 27, 1986, when its residents became the first and, so far, only permanent nuclear refugees in the world.

"The trip, which the former Pripyat residents organized, coincided with the 20th anniversary of the explosion.… While the bus heads north to the exclusion zone, the 18-mile-wide region around the reactor, the organizers start showing Pripyat movies. After a few adjustments to the bus's faulty video player, a small monitor begins to display gruesome scenes of the aftermath of the fire at the reactor. Scratchy black-and-white footage of the emergency workers shows graphic images of men in agony, with peeling sheets of skin and severe burns covering their bodies. Then we watch the mass exodus from Pripyat, a procession of 2,000 city and school buses inching their way out of the city like some strange funeral procession.

"There are also images of April 26, the day of the blast, before residents knew of the danger. Home movies capture ordinary weddings, blurred bluish footage of brides in white dresses and smiling

grooms.… This seems to be the last place on Earth where the Soviet Union is still alive. No one mentions the word radiation. They hand you a small necklace to wear when you arrive, a miniature dosimeter.

"All in this land of make-believe, where everyone says everything is all right. And after you are here for a while, you start to believe it. Maybe radiation isn't so bad. Maybe the body does adapt. Mice aren't affected. Maybe humans aren't either" ("The First Nuclear Refugees Come Home," *Discover*, June 2007).

The former residents of Pripyat, who cannot safely return to their homes for more than a brief visit, have seen for themselves the terrible destruction mankind can wreak on the environment. If, as Voltaire wrote, "optimism is the madness of insisting that all is well when we are miserable," are the former residents of Pripyat mad?

Bible students know that our world is dangerous, and that the danger is increasing. But they also know there is a real reason for hope—for optimism—as we will see in this booklet.

Forty years and more before the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown, Russians—and Americans, and billions of others on planet Earth—lived under the constant threat of nuclear war. During the "Cold War" of the 1950s, that threat covered the United States and the Soviet Union like a cloud, and citizens of both countries rushed to build bomb shelters. In 1962, the "Cuban Missile Crisis" brought a frightened world to the brink of nuclear devastation. By late 2007, at least nine nations around the globe—the U.S., Russia, China, France, Israel, the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan and North Korea—were known to have tested nuclear weapons, and several more were working diligently to gain nuclear capability.

Iran's nuclear ambitions prompted the *International Jerusalem Post* to feature an Israeli jet fighter on its front page, above the headline, "The highest stakes: If all else fails, can Israel stop Iran's nuclear program by force?" The article reported, "With Iran pushing ahead with its program in defiance of the UN and the international community, Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates announced in early November that they intended to begin upgrading their nuclear energy programs. Of the six, the most advanced by far are Egypt and Algeria. Turkey is also reported to be toying with the idea of starting a nuclear program" (January 12–18, 2007, p. 15). You can learn more about events prophesied for that region by requesting our free, eye-opening booklet, *The Middle East in Prophecy*.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many have become less fearful of nuclear catastrophe. But are we truly safe? Even today, Russia and the United States can launch nuclear missiles within 15 minutes' notice. Rogue states continue to develop atomic capabilities, and the threat of nuclear terrorism is only increasing, as technology allows ever-smaller devices to be built by the growing number of scientists with the knowledge to create them.

The terror has even moved to outer space. According to General Joseph Ashy, retired commander in chief of the United States Space Command: "We're going to fight from space and we're going to fight into space.... That's why the U.S. has development programs in directed energy and hit-to-kill mechanisms.... We will engage terrestrial targets someday—ships, airplanes, land targets—from space" (quoted in "Waging War in Space," *The Nation,* December 27, 1999).

In January 2007, China became the third nation (after the U.S. and Russia) to shoot down a space satellite. A Chinese anti-satellite weapon system destroyed a Chinese weather satellite orbiting at an estimated 537 miles above Earth—a feat demonstrating China's new ability to shoot down other nations' spy satellites and other objects in high Earth orbit. Officials from China's near-neighbors Japan and Australia expressed fears that this move might portend a new arms race in space.

Is another world war around the corner? Do you know what the Bible reveals? Most Bible students have heard of the great climactic end-time event known as "the Battle of Armageddon." But what is this battle, and how will it affect you and your family?

"It Was Like Armageddon!"

When our world faces any great calamity, we often hear commentators exclaim, "It's like Armageddon!" We read a BBC News report that a rogue computer worm could spawn a "digital Armageddon." We see business writer Michael Panzer publish *Financial Armageddon*, warning of economic disaster leading to hyperinflation and social breakdown. We find *TIME* magazine calling the loss of rainforest and the extinction of animal species an "impending Armageddon."

"It was nuclear winter. It was like Armageddon. It looked like the end of the world," said San Diego firefighter Mitch Mendler, battling the devastating Southern California fires of October 2007. But what

exactly does—what exactly will—"Armageddon" look like? Your Bible has the answer!

History's climactic battle, at the end of this present age, is described in the book of Revelation—the last book in your Bible. "And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon" (Revelation 16:16). How and why will the armies be gathered there? Just two verses earlier, we read, "For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14).

Notice this! The actual battle is not called the battle of Armageddon. It is called "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." But battle preparations commence at Armageddon. What is this place? The word Armageddon is a transliteration of the original Hebrew *har megiddo* which means the "hill of Megiddo" or "the mountain of Megiddo."

Megiddo is located about 55 miles north of Jerusalem in Israel. In ancient times it guarded the main trade route between Egypt and Damascus. It also overlooks the largest plain in Israel, called the Valley of Jezreel or the Plain of Esdraelon. The Old Testament records several major battles that took place here. In World War I, British General Allenby defeated Turkish military forces there in what became known as "the Battle of Megiddo."

With all the historic battles that have taken place at Megiddo, and its role in prophecy, the word "Armageddon" has come to symbolize any large-scale devastation. Humanity has invented many terrible weapons of mass destruction. Will these weapons bring about ***our*** Armageddon?

Deadly Threats to Planet Earth

In 2006, ABC News produced a program titled "Last Days on Earth." They state, "Last Days on Earth takes viewers inside seven of the deadliest threats to humanity. Some have the power to render us extinct, others can destroy the planet; all could entail the end of our civilization." These "deadliest threats" include nuclear war, supervolcanoes, asteroids, and plague. The CNN series titled "Planet in Peril" featured wholesale destruction of forests, and increasing numbers of extinct animal species. In presenting major threats to our

planet, the television History Channel declared the week of October 22, 2007, "Armageddon Week." Former U.S. Vice President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Al Gore produced the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*. He stated: "All the triumphs and all the tragedies, all the wars, all the famines, all the major advances... it's our only home. And that is what is at stake, our ability to live on planet Earth, to have a future as a civilization." Paramount Classics, in its promotion of the movie states: "Humanity is sitting on a time bomb. If the vast majority of the world's scientists are right, we have just ten years to avert a major catastrophe that could send our entire planet into a tail-spin of epic destruction involving extreme weather, floods, droughts, epidemics and killer heat waves beyond anything we have ever experienced."

Another movie, titled "The 11th Hour," produced and narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio, stated in its promotion, "The tragedy is the potential extinction of mankind." And "Not only is it the eleventh hour, it is 11:59."

In addition to nuclear concerns, chemical and biological weapons are a growing threat. And a new threat is on the horizon: along with the feared nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons of mass destruction, a new category—genetics, nanotechnology and robotics (GNR)—promises new horrors for the 21st century.

Sun Microsystems founder Bill Joy, an early pioneer of the minicomputer age, wrote a startling essay published in the April 2000 issue of *Wired* magazine. Titled "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us," Joy's essay contemplated the effect of these new GNR technologies on warring humanity: "I think it is no exaggeration to say we are on the cusp of the further perfection of extreme evil, an evil whose possibility spreads well beyond that which weapons of mass destruction bequeathed to the nation-states, on to a surprising and terrible empowerment of extreme individuals."

Joy is not alone in this sobering assessment. Journalist Gideon Rose offers the following analysis: "The really difficult problem will be a new kind of proliferation involving the acquisition of chemical, biological and cyberweapons by subnational actors such as terrorist groups, cults or angry individuals. These weapons are easy to make, hard to track and hard to defend against. This means that even if the U.S. does spend tens of billions of dollars on a system to shoot down North Korean missiles, we will still have to deal with the equally

Nuclear, chemical and biological dangers plague humanity.

World Trade Center, September 11, 2001

pressing problem of stopping doomsday cults or future Unabombers armed with deadly viruses" ("Will Everyone Have the Bomb?", *Time Magazine*, May 22, 2000, p. 103).

Amid all of our scientific advances in weaponry, man's inhumanity to man has not ceased. From Kosovo to Kashmir, from East Timor to Chechnya, wars and massacres continue to escalate. Since World War II, atrocities against nations or peoples have continued unabated. According to *Newsweek*: "The Genocide Convention outlawed 'acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part,' a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Postwar atrocities [include]: Bosnia: 300,000 dead, 2 million displaced; Cambodia: 1 million dead, 500,000 displaced; Rwanda: 1 million dead, 3.5 million displaced."

In the face of such evil, we can see why judgment is coming upon our planet. Yet there is good news beyond the bad. Jesus Christ, the greatest newscaster and prophet in all of human history, told us that these atrocities would end: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14).

Gathered for War

Scripture shows us that Armageddon is the gathering place for the climactic battle of the Great Day of God Almighty! Massive armies will gather on the plain of Esdraelon to begin the ultimate conflagration. But where does Armageddon fit into the panorama of prophecy? The Apostle John described the famous four horsemen of the Apocalypse. They symbolize, in order, false christs and false religion, war and its devastating effects, famines that normally follow war, and pestilences and disease which follow after famine.

Look at what the Bible says about the terrible devastation that these four horsemen bring: "So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over ***a fourth of the earth***, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth" (Revelation 6:8).

Have the nations laid down their arms since World War II? No! In the last half of the 20th century, millions suffered from wars around the world, from Korea and Indochina to Bosnia and East Africa, as well as the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Today, few nations are

left untouched by conflict. The *2006 Conflict Barometer*, published by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, gave this sobering report: "In 2006, there were 278 political conflicts. Six of these were wars, and 29 severe crises, amounting to a total of 35 conflicts carried out with a massive amount of violence. Eighty-three conflicts were classified as crises, meaning violence was used only occasionally. Altogether, 118 conflicts were carried out violently."

Yet all the destruction we have seen since the end of World War II will pale in comparison to the death that will cover planet Earth at the end of this age. One-fourth of all human beings on earth will die, as war, hunger and disease expand across the globe.

Outside the Bible, do any in our modern age see such devastation as possible? Indeed, they do. Comparing the risk of genetic tampering to the "Black Plague" that ravaged Europe in the 14th century, author Joy commented: "My own major concern with genetic engineering is… that it gives the power—whether militarily, accidentally or in a deliberate terrorist act—to create a 'White Plague'" (*Wired*, April 2000, p. 249). Modern scientists know that these horrors may be just over the horizon!

Yet mankind need not look to genetic manipulations to foresee devastation. Another deadly trend is heat and drought. World temperatures are shifting in dramatic ways. Just a few years ago, in the summer of 2003, more than 20,000 in Italy died as a result of an unprecedented heat wave. As many as 10,000 in France also died as a result of the heat that summer. In 2007, the U.S. Drought Monitor, published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, classified several states in the western U.S. as experiencing "severe" or "extreme" drought, and several southeastern U.S. states as facing the ultimate category of "exceptional" drought. As we read earlier, drought conditions in Southern California supported widespread wind-whipped fires in October 2007, destroying more than 500,000 acres and at least 1,700 homes in what firefighters described as an out-of-control inferno!

Will the southwestern U.S. be able to support growing populations in the future? The October 21, 2007 cover of *The New York Times Magazine* asked: "The Perfect Drought: Will population and climate change leave the West without water?" In that magazine, writer Jon Gertner observed, "In the Southwest this past summer, the outlook was equally sobering. A catastrophic reduction in the flow of

the Colorado River—which mostly consists of snowmelt from the Rocky Mountains—has always served as a kind of thought experiment for water engineers, a risk situation from the outer edge of their practical imaginations. Some 30 million people depend on that water. A greatly reduced river would wreak chaos in seven states: Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California." Gertner goes on to quote Columbia University scientist Richard Seager, who recently completed a study of the present dry conditions: "You can't call it a drought anymore, because it's going over to a drier climate. No one says the Sahara is in drought" ("The Future Is Drying Up," pp. 70, 74).

The continent of Australia has also been experiencing unprecedented drought. Australia's National Climate Centre in November 2007 issued a report outlining drought conditions across the parched continent. Although northwestern Australia has experienced very wet conditions, other large regions have since November 2001 experienced "lowest on record" rainfall, accompanied by unusual heat. In the Murray-Darling Basin, rainfall from November 2001 through October 2007 matched or surpassed historic lows, with 75 percent of the basin experiencing rainfall levels in the lowest 10 percent since recordkeeping began.

In the U.S., older Americans living in their nation's Midwest region can still remember the "Dust Bowl" conditions that ravaged the Great Plains states from 1933 through 1939. Will such conditions be repeated—or grow even worse? Will we see more extended droughts in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand? The Creator God gave this warning through the prophet Amos: "'I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,' says the LORD" (Amos 4:7–8). Unless we wholeheartedly turn to God, we *will* experience severe punishment.

Seven Seals Reveal Our Future

The well-known "four horsemen of the apocalypse" symbolize the devastation of much of planet Earth, and the death of billions of

human beings. You need to understand the sequence of these awesome prophetic milestones, if you hope to prepare yourself and your loved ones for what is ahead. The Bible reveals that six major prophetic events, including the famous "four horsemen," lead up to the battle of Armageddon. That battle, as we will see, is in fact a part of the prophesied "seventh seal." What are these mysterious, prophesied seven seals—and how can we understand their meaning?

The Book of Revelation—the last book in your Bible—is a mystery to most people. Some think it is just allegory. Others say it is all about past events. Did you know that this book, in its description of the seven seals, gives the outline of end-time prophecy? You can know how end-time events will unfold—and how you can be ready for them! You need to understand the seven seals of Revelation. For a more complete explanation of the mysteries of Revelation, be sure to write for our free booklet, *Revelation: The Mystery Unveiled!*

Around 95AD, the Apostle John wrote down in Revelation the inspired words of God. John had been exiled to the island of Patmos off the southwest coast of Turkey in the Aegean Sea. The island was used as a Roman penal colony in the first century. He wrote: "I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9).

God chose the Apostle John to record the Apocalypse, or Revelation. As Scripture explains, it was John "who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw" (v. 2). Notice this blessing pronounced on those who seriously study the book of Revelation: "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (v. 3).

Humanity as a whole is ignorant of one of the greatest books ever written! God has deliberately hidden the deep meaning of this mysterious book from those who are spiritually blinded—which means that He has hidden its meaning from most of the world.

Even Adam Clarke, the famous Bible commentator, found difficulty in making any sense of Revelation. Clarke wrote: "I had resolved, for a considerable time, not to meddle with this book, because I foresaw that I could produce nothing satisfactory on it" (*Preface to the Revelation of St. John*, p. 966).

But ***you*** can understand the book of Revelation. Notice that this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ—not that of St. John the Divine, as some Bibles title the book. What, then, is the purpose of Jesus' revelation? It is to "show His servants—things which must shortly take place" (Revelation 1:1). ***The purpose of the book is not to hide the truth, but to reveal events leading up to Christ's return!*** In fact, the word "apocalypse" comes from the Greek *apokalupsis*, which means "uncovering" or "unveiling." You need to know what those prophesied events are!

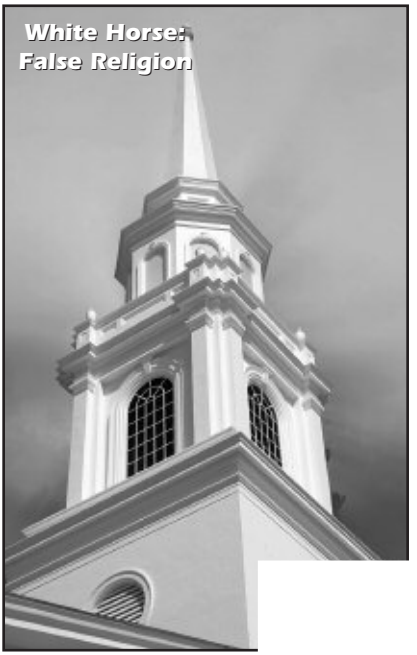
The seven seals reveal prophetic events that lie just ahead of us. In Revelation 5, we read about a scroll sealed with seven seals. John begins to weep when at first "no one" is found worthy to open the scroll. Then: "But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals'" (v. 5). The Lion of the tribe of Judah is Jesus Christ—He begins to open the scroll sealed with seven seals.

In Revelation 6, we read the description of six of those seals. The first four seals are known as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. The Apostle John describes the Lamb—Jesus Christ—opening the first seal. "Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, 'Come and see.' And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer" (vv. 1–2).

What do the white horse and its rider represent? Some commentators mistakenly say that these represent Christ, because the imagery appears similar to the description of Christ given in Revelation 19. But when we compare the Revelation 19 description to the first horseman, we find notable differences. Christ comes with many crowns (v. 12), not just one crown. And He comes with a sword (v. 15), not a bow as in Revelation 6.

Christ is the Revelator. ***He*** reveals the meaning of this white horse. Jesus describes the signs of His second coming, and the sequence of events, that coincide with the seals of Revelation. "And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will deceive many'" (Matthew 24:4–5).

This white horse, and its rider, represent false religions—"false christs" (v. 24). In Matthew 24, Jesus continues describing the


White Horse:
False Religion

Red Horse:
War

Black Horse:
Famine

Pale Horse:
Pestilence

that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh…. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved'" (Acts 2:14–21).

The Apostle Peter instructed them to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38), and 3,000 were baptized that day!

Now, notice the end-time prophetic signs. The Apostle John continues in Revelation chapter six: "And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place" (Revelation 6:13–14).

Will asteroids and meteors cause catastrophic damage to life on Earth? Will God eventually use asteroids, small or great, to punish unrepentant, rebellious nations and peoples? Scripture shows plainly that huge hailstones ***will*** crush people and property. "From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible" (Revelation 16:21, *NIV*).

Movies such as 1997's *Asteroid*, and 1998's *Armageddon* and *Deep Impact*, have portrayed asteroids as threatening all life on Earth. Is there any real danger of smaller asteroids colliding with our planet? Author John Roach, writing in *National Geographic News,* warned: "It is almost certain that Earth will be hit by an asteroid large enough to exterminate a large percentage of our planet's life, including possibly over a billion people, according to researchers. But as such cataclysmic collisions occur on average only once in a million years or so, are they really worth worrying about?" ("Killer Asteroids: A Real But Remote Risk?", June 19, 2003). Yes, Bible prophecy reveals that we should be ***very*** concerned!

Not only will asteroids and meteors frighten people, but massive earthquakes will also shake planet Earth. As the Apostle John saw in vision, "every mountain and island was moved out of its place." If you have ever experienced a strong earthquake, as many have in California, you know how frightening earthquakes can be. Your knees and legs feel weak as water, even if you have not been seriously injured. Perhaps you feel secure because your city or region has no

history of earthquakes. In a *TIME* magazine cover story, author George J. Church reminded us: "Earthquakes are unpredictable. They almost invariably strike not only at times but at places nobody expects, and no one quake is exactly like any other" (January 30, 1995).

How powerful can earthquakes be? The historic Mississippi Valley earthquake on December 16, 1811, near New Madrid, Missouri, actually reversed the course of the Mississippi River! The series of quakes had estimated magnitudes of 8.6, 8.4, and 8.8. As the *Time Almanac 2001* states: "It is the largest series of earthquakes known to have occurred in North America" (p. 614).

Natural disasters have killed hundreds of thousands in recent years. In October of 2005, a magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck Pakistan, leaving nearly 90,000 dead and more than three million homeless. In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans, and disrupted millions of lives along the U.S. Gulf Coast. On December 26, 2004, the 9.1 magnitude Sumatra earthquake, and the resulting tsunami, killed more than 280,000 across South Asia.

Earthquakes and the "heavenly signs" will introduce the Day of the Lord: the time of God's wrath and judgment on an unthankful, rebellious world. Jesus Christ, the Lamb, will be wrathful. He will execute God's righteous judgments. The Day of the Lord is also called "the great day of His wrath" (Revelation 6:17)!

Some critics say, "There have always been earthquakes. There have always been volcanoes and other environmental disruptions. What we're seeing today doesn't mean Christ's return is any closer." It is incredible to believe, but even as end-time events grow far more intense, some scoffers will deny until the last possible moment, when they will be confronted by God Himself, that He is pouring out His judgment on rebellious humanity. Just after Jesus speaks of His second coming, He states: "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see all these things, ***know that it is near***—at the doors!" (Matthew 24:32–33). Jesus instructs all His true followers to be knowledgeable about these signs.

Yes, there have always been cynics and doubters, but *now* is the time to wake up and heed what is happening around the world. God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel about the skeptics and scoffers. "Son of

man, what is this proverb that you people have about the land of Israel, which says, 'The days are prolonged, and every vision fails'?" (Ezekiel 12:22). What does God say about mankind's skepticism? "Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will lay this proverb to rest, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel." But say to them, "The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision"'" (Ezekiel 12:23). We need to keep our eyes open to what God is doing—now, and as the end of the age approaches and the seals are unleashed on our world!

Framework for Prophecy

We need to understand the time sequence leading up to the Christ's second coming. There are three major prophetic milestones leading up to His return:

- The Great Tribulation
- The Heavenly Signs
- The Day of the Lord

These three events cover a period of *about* three-and-a-half years. There are more than 30 prophecies in your Bible referring to the Day of the Lord. How long is the Day of the Lord? Two scriptures give us the answer. Speaking of God's judgments on the nations, Isaiah writes, "For it is the ***day*** of the LORD'S vengeance, ***the year*** of recompense for the cause of Zion" (Isaiah 34:8). Isaiah 63:4 also shows that the Day of the Lord in end-time prophecy, the time preceding Christ's return, is a period of one year!

In addition to those milestones, the book of Revelation reveals four ongoing events that continue for that period of three-and-a-half years (see chart on pages 22–23). What are the four ongoing events that occur during the three-and-a-half years? The first event is that Jerusalem is trampled by the Gentiles for 42 months (Revelation 11:1–2). The second event is the Two Witnesses prophesying for 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3). The third event is the Church's time in the wilderness, which the Bible describes as "a time, and times, and half a time"—biblical language for three-and-a-half years (Revelation 12:13–17). The woman described here in Revelation 12 is symbolic of the Church. The fourth event is the Beast continuing for 42 months in its final revival (Revelation 13:1–5). This Beast symbolizes a revived Roman Empire. For more detail on this vital topic, be sure to request our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation, Myth,*

Metaphor, or Soon-Coming Reality? This revived Beast will be a superpower that will rival and eventually surpass the United States! Watch events in Europe as this Beast prepares to appear on the scene.

Three major milestones lead up to the second coming of Christ. The Great Tribulation lasts for about two-and-a-half years. Next, the Heavenly Signs shock people all over the world. The Heavenly Signs introduce the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is the prophetic time period of one year leading up to Christ's return. So there are four ongoing events during these three-and-a-half years: Jerusalem is trodden down by the Gentiles, the two witnesses prophesy, the church is nourished in the wilderness, and the Beast power dominates for 42 months.

The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord is a major prophetic event that will affect the lives of every human being on Earth. You need to understand the meaning of the Day of the Lord, its powerful significance, and its place in prophecy. The great prophets of the Bible, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel spoke about it. The so-called "minor prophets"—Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah and Malachi—also emphasized this event. Even the Apostles Peter and Paul wrote about it. The Day of the Lord is the seventh seal of Revelation, consisting of seven trumpet plagues, through which God judges the nations. The seventh trumpet plague includes Armageddon!

As we read in Revelation 6, the sixth seal or the heavenly signs introduce the Day of the Lord, also called "the great day of His wrath" (Revelation 6:17)! So, what is the Day of the Lord? It is the climactic time of God's judgment on the nations. It is the time when Almighty God begins to intervene more directly and powerfully in the affairs of humanity. *Holman Bible Dictionary* defines the Day of the Lord as follows: "The time when God reveals His sovereignty over human powers and human existence."

The book of Revelation emphasizes prophetic events leading up to the return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Apostle John writes in Revelation 1:10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet." John is not describing a day of the week, as some commentators believe. He is speaking of the

major prophetic period of time described in the rest of the book as the Day of the Lord. The expression "Lord's Day" here in Revelation is plainly referring to the theme of the whole book, the prophetic Day of the Lord culminating in Jesus Christ's return as King of kings and Lord of lords!

We need to understand that John is ***not*** referring to Sunday as the Lord's day. If He were doing that, he would have referred to Sunday as "the first day" of the week as he did in the Gospel of John. Jesus Himself, who kept the seventh-day Sabbath, said He was Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27–28)! He was not speaking of Sunday!

As we have already established, this year-long Day of the Lord is the seventh seal of Revelation. And the seventh seal consists of seven trumpet plagues or judgments. John writes in Revelation 8:1, "When He [Christ] opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets." They are introduced by "noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake" (v. 5).

The first four trumpets announce ecological devastation that will plague our planet. A third of all trees are burned up, and all green grass is burned up. A third of all living creatures in the sea die; a third of ocean-going ships are destroyed. A third of rivers and springs become poisonous. A third of the heavens become darkened.

Notice Joel's sobering warning: "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for ***the day of the LORD*** is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations" (Joel 2:1–2).

The trumpet is used to sound an alarm—to help people prepare for major battles or as described here, an invading army! Here the prophet Joel warns of a unique time in all history. The next verse describes terrible destruction, a scorched-earth policy—everything is left desolate. "A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them" (v. 3). During the Day of the Lord, invading armies will burn vast territories. Humanity will also see incredible disruption of the heavens as well as total destruction on the land. "The earth quakes before them,

the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it?" (Joel 2:10–11).

God calls this destructive Gentile force ***His*** army! As we will see later, a powerful army of 200 million, prophesied to destroy one-third of Earth's population, will send troops into the Middle East. Almighty God ***will*** intervene in human affairs in a dramatic way. Major wars will erupt when God executes judgment on the nations.

Not only will military weapons destroy vast regions, incredible ecological devastation will destroy agriculture. "What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten" (Joel 1:4). In October 2007, The *West Australian News* reported the following: "Locusts are emerging as the latest threat to WA's drastically slashed grain crop and sought-after livestock feed.... Last year, the department spent $11.1 million spraying 450,000 hectares across about 70 shires through the northern, central and southern agricultural regions. Farmers matched those efforts. While the campaign was mainly a success, the pests remained in big enough numbers to invade about 70 towns and healthy enough to reach the south coast and put down eggs to produce the latest generation."

In the not-too-distant future, the insect plagues some nations experience today will seem minor by comparison. When God brings punishments upon rebellious nations in the future Day of the Lord, He will call upon the nations to humble themselves and repent! Of course, you and I do not need to wait until then! As we approach the coming Day of the Lord, we see that God calls His people to humble themselves: "Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD. Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty" (Joel 1:14–15).

We need to remember that—as devastating as these events may be—they lead up to the great hope we all have, the return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ! God will judge the nations during the Day of the Lord, but He will also be preparing a time of restoration.

Notice: "The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain" (Joel 3:16–17). Yes, our hope is in the Savior and His coming rulership over all the nations!

The last three trumpet plagues are called woes. The word "woe" is an exclamation of grief! "And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, 'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!'" (Revelation 8:13).

Revelation 9 describes the ***first woe*** or the fifth trumpet plague. The fifth angel sounds a trumpet that begins a military action that lasts for five months. The Apostle John describes the war in apocalyptic terms: "And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings *was* like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit [Satan], whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things" (Revelation 9:9–12).

The ***second woe***, or the sixth trumpet plague, is pictured with symbols of horses and horsemen. Here we see an intense military counterattack. We read: "Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates'" (vv. 13–14).

We should note one biblical key that can help you understand the future in the Middle East—prophecies concerning the Euphrates River. The Euphrates River runs from Turkey through Syria and Iraq to the Persian Gulf. The nation of Iran lies immediately to the east of Iraq.

An army of 200 million, prophesied to destroy ***one-third of the planet's population***, will move troops westward across the Euphrates River. "So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the

vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths" (vv. 15–18).

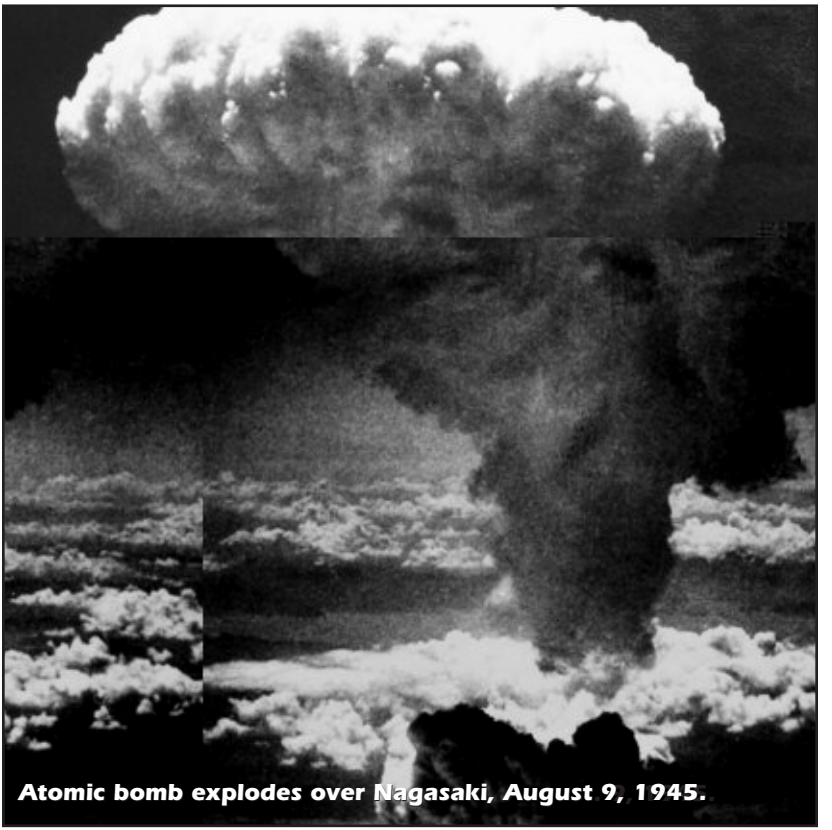
This is describing world war! And this phase of World War III will kill billions of human beings! Jesus said that unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved—all life on planet Earth would be destroyed (Matthew 24:21–22).

Then the seventh trumpet sounds. For Christians, the sounding of the seventh trumpet is good news because it announces Jesus Christ's return and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on planet Earth. We all need to be preparing spiritually for that time! "Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" (Revelation 11:15).

Pre-, Post- or Amillenialism?

Some theologians wrongly teach that there will be no literal thousand-year rule of Christ on planet Earth. This teaching is called amillennialism. Others wrongly teach that the Church will grow in power and influence, perhaps over thousands or tens of thousands of years, converting billions of people and bringing morality and peace to our planet before Christ returns to execute His final judgment. This false teaching is called postmillennialism.

The Bible, by contrast, teaches premillennialism—that Jesus Christ will return, ***before*** the Millennium, and will rule on planet Earth with the saints for a thousand years. At the seventh trumpet, Jesus Christ will become Ruler over planet Earth, and faithful Christians who are in the grave will be resurrected to immortality and glory. Notice this inspiring statement: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Genuine Christians who are still alive at Christ's return will be changed from mortality to immortality. "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the



Atomic bomb explodes over Nagasaki, August 9, 1945.

Hiroshima survivors, 1945

this war-torn planet a thousand years of peace. "And the LORD shall be King over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:9).

God Will Save Doomed Mankind

God will step in to save mankind from total annihilation. The seventh trumpet will announce a new world government—a new world order under the King of kings, Jesus Christ: "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" (Revelation 11:15).

That is the good news, the gospel this sorry world so desperately needs. Yes, the world will survive Armageddon. Why? Because there are faithful Christians for whom the world will be saved. As Jesus stated in Matthew 24:22, "but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." God will save the world to demonstrate His way of life and peace for a thousand years. The Prince of Peace, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, will teach all nations ***the way*** to world peace. And how long will the world enjoy the peaceful reign of Christ and the saints? The Apostle John describes that time: "And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.... Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4, 6).

The world ***will not*** be totally destroyed in a nuclear holocaust. But God will judge the nations—including our western nations, which have become hypocritical—having at most a form of godliness but denying the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). We individually need to be spiritually awake, alert and spiritually clothed. As Jesus said: "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15).

We should all look forward to Christ's return. Now is the time to prepare spiritually—to repent and change our lives! Seek God in prayer. Study your Bible, and commit yourself to live by it (Matthew 4:4). Look forward to a world under the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, when all nations will learn how to live by the Bible, the law of God, the government of God and the love of God. Today's Christians are preparing to assist Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God, where they

will teach others the Way they have learned from their Savior (Isaiah 30:20-21; Revelation 5:10).

Beyond Armageddon

Will the world survive Armageddon? Will we face the reality of a "second nuclear age" and the coming devastation of World War III? Jesus warns us all concerning the end-times and the Great Tribulation, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved" (Matthew 24:22). The good news is that Christ will return as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). Remember His encouraging promise to return to Earth and establish the Kingdom of God here. He told His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, ***I will come again*** and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2–3). The gospel, or the good news of the Kingdom, proclaims a new age of peace and prosperity for the world. Christ will rule on Earth: "And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east" (Zechariah 14:4). The King will rule from Jerusalem, the new Capital of the world. Faithful Christians, the saints, will serve and rule with Him: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9–10).

Faithful Christians will inherit the Kingdom of God: "But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever" (Daniel 7:18). Those saints will be in the first resurrection when Christ returns. They will rule on planet Earth, serve under the King of kings, and help billions of people during the Millennium. At Christ's return—at the beginning of the Millennium—they will be resurrected, or changed, and given immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51–54). They "shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man" (v. 49); They will have glory, power, immortality and a spirit body.

Remember, after Jesus' resurrection, He ascended to heaven and had His pre-incarnate glory restored to Him, such that "His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength" (Revelation 1:16). Yet Jesus was able to manifest Himself in the flesh after His resurrection; He appeared to His disciples and shared bread and fish with them (John 21:13). The

saints also will be able to manifest themselves to the physical nations during the Millennium. As kings and priests, they will be governing and teaching. In fact, the priests in ancient Israel were the teachers. During the Millennium, today's faithful Christians will be teaching God's way of life—the way of truth, the way of the Bible, the way of living that Christ exemplified and taught. As kings and priests, they will teach the world the way to peace: "And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:20–21).

We have seen from the Bible that faithful Christians will rule on planet Earth as kings and priests with Jesus Christ for a thousand years. God means what He says. The time is coming when all nations will know the true God. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

God's Kingdom will rule on planet Earth. Jerusalem will be the capital of the world! Notice this inspiring prophecy: "Thus says the LORD: 'I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain'" (Zechariah 8:3). Faithful Christians will serve Jesus Christ as kings and priests ***here on Earth***—not in heaven as many wrongly teach!

After the thousand years, Satan the devil will be released to deceive the nations. Those who follow that deceiver will be destroyed by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Satan and his demons will be cast into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41). Then the Book of Life will be opened for billions, for the first time, in the White Throne Judgment. This is the time of the second resurrection, the judgment period when many of your friends and relatives, who never had a real opportunity for salvation (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4), will be given that opportunity. After the White Throne Judgment, what will happen? "Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14–15).

This is the real hellfire of your Bible. After the White Throne Judgment, all the unrepentant human beings who have ever lived will

be destroyed in the lake of fire. All those who have obeyed Christ and accepted Him as Savior—as Lord and Master—will be glorified children of God, living forever in the immortalized family of God. The Apostle Peter writes that our planet will then be totally purged by fire: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

When Christ returns to planet Earth, He will conquer all His enemies. He will conquer the nations and their powerful armies that fight against Him at His coming. The Day of the Lord, including Armageddon, will bring God's judgment on the nations. As we have seen, in one sense the Day of the Lord is the year preceding Christ's return. In another sense, it continues on through the millennium and on out to eternity. Earth will be renewed, and so will the heavens. Then God's heavenly throne will come to the purified Earth: "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God'" (Revelation 21:3).

Notice that God not only gives Christians planet Earth (Matthew 5:5)—He also gives us "all things"—the entire universe: "He who overcomes shall inherit ***all things***, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Revelation 21:7; cf. Romans 8:32). God's purpose is to prepare us to govern the universe. We will be able to travel instantly to far-off galaxies. We will not be limited by time and space. God wants us to liberate the creation from its decay and corruption. As Paul wrote, "the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

Your Personal Future

Our world—with its rebellious, God-defying ways—is headed for Armageddon. Jesus Christ will judge the nations during the Day of the Lord and Armageddon. The Great Tribulation, leading up to that time, is a time of punishment on the descendants of Jacob—the United States and the British-descended nations, as well as nations of northwestern Europe, and also the Jewish people. It is the time of "Jacob's trouble." "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). For a more com-

plete explanation of that judgment period, be sure to write for our free booklet, *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*.

Will you personally survive the dangerous times ahead? We need to understand that God promises to protect those who turn to Him through Jesus Christ. He will provide for His Church during the three-and-a-half years of the Great Tribulation, the Day of the Lord, and Armageddon. "Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman [symbolic of the Church, c.f. Ephesians 5:22–32] was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent" (Revelation 12:13–14).

The Church is *not* raptured, but divinely protected in the wilderness—in "her place" on this earth—during the final conflagration before Christ's return. What can you do? What action *must* you take? God tells us through the prophet Isaiah, "Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that ***you will be hidden*** in the day of the LORD'S anger" (Zephaniah 2:3). Yes, God will "hide" His people during the traumatic times ahead. But He expects us to be spiritually awake and watchful. Jesus warns us, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:34–36).

You need to watch world events as they relate to Bible prophecy. And you need to pray that you will be able to stand before Christ at His coming. God gives us a choice: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). You need to choose life, and choose the salvation that God offers you through Jesus Christ! You need to repent and be baptized, as the Apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38). If you have come to the place in your life where you have made a commitment to change your lifestyle and surrender to Jesus Christ, we urge you to counsel with one of our

ministers. You may want to read our informative booklet, *Christian Baptism: Its True Meaning*. Just write to one of our regional offices listed at the end of this booklet.

God has a wonderful plan of salvation for all humanity. He wants you to be a part of His family for all eternity. Paul wrote: "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:14–15).

One of the awesome activities Christians will experience, for all eternity, is fellowship in God's loving family. It is a royal family (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Jesus Christ will come back as King of kings, and Lord of lords. Jesus Christ will "have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). Yes, we will be kings and priests, serving under our Savior, Jesus Christ!

God has an awesome destiny in store for His faithful children. We will be active, fulfilled and gloriously happy for all eternity. Foretelling the coming of the Messiah, and His eternal kingdom, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end…" (Isaiah 9:6–7).

Do you want to be a part of the glorious future God has planned for you? Do you look forward to the day when God the Father's throne of grace will come to planet Earth? Only then, finally, will there be no more pain, suffering and death. John writes of our inspiring ultimate destiny: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). This is the eternity God has planned for you. May God help you to understand His great love and purpose for you. Now is the time to change your way of living. Now is the time to prepare for the challenging days ahead and look to God for protection during the Great Tribulation, the Day of the Lord and Armageddon. May you look forward to God's coming Kingdom, your potential future in the glorious family of God, and beyond into eternity!

"He who overcomes
shall inherit all things,
and I will be his God and
he shall be My son."
—Revelation 21:7