

The Great Tribulation -- Is It About to Happen?

Jesus Christ warned, "*For then shall be Great Tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved [alive]: but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened*" (Matthew 24:21,22).

But when? He said, "*For then...*," referring to the globe girdling events of His famous Olivet prophecy He had just explained to His disciples. He had spoken of drought, famine, wars, religious persecution, disease epidemics, and earthquakes—of nature in chaos, and nations struggling in massive wars. Are we about to enter that terrible time? Just where are we, now, in Bible prophecy?

by Garner Ted Armstrong

What is going on? The news reports we receive daily are about a never-ending series of floods, drought, famines, wars, terrorism, arson, racism, crime, drug abuse, murder—a horrifying tale of human tragedies—accounts of man's inhumanity to man, and nature in chaos!

Governments are in upheaval in Korea, Japan, Russia, Thailand, and many other countries.

The narrow victory of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel immediately triggered renewed vicious terrorist attacks in Southern Lebanon and Israel. Hezbollah guerrillas ambushed an Israeli army patrol, killing five young men, and injuring eight others. A man and wife, recent immigrants to Israel from Russia, were machine-gunned to death in their car north of Jerusalem.

Major weekly news magazines at home and abroad trumpeted warnings that the peace process was dead. Netanyahu's narrow victory was a severe setback to the Clinton administration, which had heavily backed Shimon Perez.

Major Arab summits take place, and in the immediate aftermath, the largest terrorist bomb in history shatters a U.S. Air Force building in Saudi Arabia, killing nineteen young Americans, injuring hundreds more!

Are we in the beginning stages of the Great Tribulation Jesus prophesied?

One thing is sure. We are living in frightening times! Jesus Christ astonished His disciples when He foretold the complete destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. When they came to Him privately, atop the Mount of Olives, they asked Him, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the [age]?" (Matthew 24:3).

Many suppose Jesus talked about the end of the world. He did not. He specifically promised mankind would not perish from the earth (Matthew 24:22), but that God would cut short the horrible time of world wars and the threat of nuclear annihilation.

What Christ talked about was the end of civilization as we know it. The Greek word means "age," or the "cosmos," the societies of man.

They did not ask only about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, but about the sign of His coming, and of the end of the age!

Jesus then gave them the most important prophecy in all the Bible the Olivet prophecy. It is lengthy, detailed, specific!

Millions "believe on" Jesus Christ. Millions claim Him as their Lord and Savior. Yet, many do not believe what He said; they do not believe Christ!

Like a newscaster Who looked far beyond His time, down into our time, now, Jesus Christ foretold the major events which would rock the world, ending in the time of God's intervention through the Tribulation, Heavenly Signs, and Day of the Lord.

Religious Deception

First, He predicted religious deception. He said, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:5). He elaborated on this prophecy as He continued, saying, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many," and, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:11,24).

Today, there are thousands who preach "in the name of Jesus." Millions believe their messages; believe they are "saved" if they only believe on Jesus Christ. At the same time, they do not believe they must obey Christ, or believe what He said!

Christ's warning about false ministers was not only for the time in which we live. From the very beginning of the New Testament church, there have been false Christs and false prophets. Today, complete religious confusion reigns. Hundreds of disagreeing denominations and thousands of small, independent churches all claim to preach only the truth. Yet, each disagrees with all the others.

Churches and religious organizations divide, split, then divide again. New churches spring up. This is true in every religion, from Judaism to Islam, from Buddhism to nominal Christianity.

Religion generally is a babylon of confusion, with thousands of sincere searchers wondering, "Where is the true church today?" Many wonder if Daniel's prophecy is occurring right now; if a "falling away" (2 Thessalonians. 2:3) is taking place. Daniel wrote, "and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be accomplished" (Daniel 12:7). This was in response to Daniel's question to a powerful angel, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?"

Daniel was asking, just as many of us are asking today, about the Great Tribulation.

The heavenly messenger had said, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Daniel 12:1).

The duration of this great time, which is the exact same time as the "Great Tribulation" spoken of by Jesus Christ, is "a time, times, and an half" (Daniel 12:7), or three and one-half years.

The tribulation upon Israel is to last for three and one-half years. Jerusalem shall be "trodden down of the Gentiles" for three and one-half years, and the ministry of the two witnesses (Revelation 11) is to last for three and one-half years.

Obviously, once the Great Tribulation begins, this world is only about three and one-half years away from the second coming of Christ!

Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

On the one hand, Christ went to great lengths to explain to His disciples the general trends and conditions on earth prior to His second coming. On the other hand, He said we cannot know the exact time.

He said people would be living life as usual; unaware, oblivious to the danger. "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:37-42).

He is not describing riotous drinking, or gluttonous eating. He is describing life as usual—people going about their everyday lives as if completely unaware of what is about to happen to them! Yet, they had no reason to be unaware then, for Noah was a "preacher of righteousness," who not only preached for one hundred and twenty years, but produced the evidence of his message of witness and warning as the great ark took shape before the eyes of his generation.

Tens of millions of people in the United States, Canada, Britain, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and many, many other countries have heard the message of witness and warning the gospel of the Kingdom of God, since the early 1950s, and even before!

People often comment: "I used to listen to you and your father on radio back in the 1960s!"

But only a few have truly heeded the message. Only a comparative few have truly taken warning, and made the changes necessary in their lives. But a few have become a vital part of the work of God for this age.

The vast majority of those who have heard, and who are viewing the telecast or reading our literature today, take no action. Some ridicule. Some completely reject God's truth.

Peter said people would actually be sneering and scoffing at those who would warn them of the impending intervention of God in human affairs—the Day of the Lord—"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking in their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation'" (2 Peter 3:3,4).

Many people argue, "Oh, there have always been droughts! There have always been disease epidemics. There have always been floods, and hurricanes, and earthquakes. These things come in cycles!"

But God's word says, "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was [during the time of Noah], being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men...but the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and their works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:3-10).

Willingly ignorant? Does God mean people really don't want to know?

Callused Disregard

Christ said the influence of society would be a major factor on people's attitudes. We know Satan the devil hates God! He hates God's people, and he hates God's work! It follows that he will do anything he can to attack those who are doing God's work.

Notice: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate on another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity [lawlessness!] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:9-12).

Today, the climate that is created by the wretched trash shown on television and in motion pictures—the incessant din of mayhem, murder, violent explosions, and crimes of every description—wears callouses on the consciences of many of God's people.

Like a continuous barrage, the news media and what passes for "entertainment" assaults decency, sympathy, empathy, and consideration for others. Millions are cold, heartless, aloof toward the suffering of others.

Hatred reigns. Dozens of racist hate groups meet together, plot their next drive-by shooting, or arson. Hundreds of thousands of youths form gangs, spray graffiti all over every bridge, overpass, wall, or building they can reach, and plan how to murder their rivals. Drive-by shootings and murder are initiation rituals among many gangs in the United States!

The cacophony of violence wears upon the conscience and attitude of God's people. Christ said so!

As the cruelty and heartlessness increase; as people become colder, more dispassionate and nihilistic, so the God-ordained traditional values of family, home, the church, and patriotism wane. Anyone who does not know America is in serious trouble from within is simply uninformed, or living in a dream-world.

Now, let's look at the step-by-step series of events Christ said would lead into the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord.

False Christs; False Prophets

As we have read above, Jesus Christ especially warned His true followers to beware of counterfeits. He said that many—the majority of those who claimed to be His representatives—would be false Christs and false prophets. He said some of them would have demonic power!

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect!" (Matthew 24:24).

The very elect are those specially called and chosen of God; those who have been granted repentance and conversion; those in whom God has placed His Holy Spirit.

They are the ones of whom Christ spoke when He said, "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine" (John 10:14). He said, in His parable of the sheepfold, "And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:4,5).

Are you one of those? Have you been so deeply convicted by God's word, and have you so thoroughly proved to yourself the truth of God, that it would be impossible for a false prophet to deceive you? If you have never heard it, write, or call immediately for a free sermon tape entitled, "How Not To Be Deceived!" It will be a real eye opener.

Actually, Satan had attempted to confuse the world by sending "false Christs" to masquerade as the true Messiah long before Jesus was born. From the time of His ascension into heaven, false Christs and false

prophets accomplished their deceitful work.

They were so numerous in the first century that much of the New Testament was written in an effort to keep the church free from false doctrine! Paul continually resisted those who wanted the early church to go back into rituals such as circumcision, or pagan "converts" who espoused hedonism.

The letters to the churches of Revelation 2 and 3 reveal the terrible conditions that had become extant as a result of false teachers. They represented every extreme, from asceticism to bacchanalian orgies.

Simon Magus was one of the first (read Acts 8:5-24). But there were many others. Finally, near the end of the first century, Jude, the brother of Jesus, wrote, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Already, before the last books of the Bible had been written, false teachers were leading God's people into false doctrines.

Those words might well be heeded by thousands of God's people today, who have been led into incredible error and apostasy!

Jude continued, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace [undeserved forgiveness] of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

When false doctrines and deception failed to stamp out God's true church, Satan inspired the apostate church to attempt to murder all who remained faithful to God's truth.

As the centuries passed, horrifying persecutions took place against those who clung to the truth of God. The large, visible church had become completely apostate. Eventually, countless thousands were martyred in the most vicious manner!

Before the close of the first century, the Emperor Domitian pursued a violent persecution against Christians. Literally thousands were killed! He even killed his own cousin, Flavius Clemens.

Many of the most famous of the so-called "church fathers" were killed. Polycarp, who was a student of the apostle John, was burned alive. Ignatius, who lived from about A.D. 67 to A.D. 110, was thrown into an arena to be tom to bits by wild beasts upon the orders of the Roman emperor, Trajan. Justin Martyr (whose name has ever after meant death for a cause) was murdered in Rome. Iranaeus was martyred. Origen was imprisoned and tortured until he died upon orders from the emperor Decius.

There were hundreds of others who were viciously killed for their faith; thousands, over the years. Fox's Book of Martyrs is not good bedtime reading, for it recounts the most heart-rending details of deliberate murder in the "name of Jesus."

Thousands died as the great false church sought to exterminate those who dared to continue to observe God's Sabbath days, or to keep the Passover on the 14th of Nisan.

Religious persecution continues in many, many nations today! In nations all over the world, religious and ethnic hatreds boil over; regional wars break out; "ethnic (read, "religious") cleansing" in Bosnia was carried out in the same way Hitler's SS massacred helpless civilians in Poland, Russia, and many other countries. Thousands have died, many brutally shot down where they stood, to be buried in mass graves by bulldozers.

Within recent weeks, the sickening sight of UN investigators uncovering moldering bones, shoes, bits of clothing, soiled driver's licenses and personal identification has appeared on national television.

Why were these people killed? Because of the hatreds between nominal "Christians" and Muslims!

As horrifying as it sounds, and as unlikely as it may appear, given our comparative time of peace and safety in the United States and the western world of Christianity today, Jesus Christ said terrible martyrdom is going to afflict the people of God before the time of the end.

Millions believe they will be "raptured" away to heaven before having to give any personal witness. Many thousands believe they will be whisked away to a "place of safety," so they will not have to be involved in God's great work during the horrendous times of the "Great Tribulation." It is vitally important that we understand the role of each individual Christian during the years ahead.

Wars and Rumors of Wars

A fundamental truth needs to be understood about Christ's famous Olivet prophecy. That is simply this: that each of the signs leading up to Christ's return to rule this earth began almost immediately!

There were "false Christs" long before Jesus Christ Himself walked this earth, just as there were wars, droughts, famines, earthquakes, and other calamities.

Jesus Christ was not saying the very first false prophet in history would not begin to preach until just before the Great Tribulation, any more than He was saying the first war to ever be fought would occur then. Rather, He was showing how each of these events would begin to develop in greater intensity and that they would overtake and overlap each other, until all these terrible events would be occurring at the same time.

False Christs and false prophets cause racial, religious, and political hatred. They become a root cause of human societies waging war against each other.

Wars cause famines, because they destroy infrastructure, transportation, water and food supplies, and the means of peaceful productivity, hygiene, and good health. Massive dislocation of whole populations, thousands of refugees without food, shelter, clean water, and the means of survival bring about terrible disease epidemics and wholesale starvation.

One only needs to remember World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, and, more recently, Bosnia, to understand how warfare usually kills more helpless civilians than soldiers.

Droughts are not always "acts of God." By man's voracious rape of forests, grasslands, and important watersheds, underground aquifers are depleted, soil erodes and blows away in great dust storms, and regional and national temperatures and climatic conditions are altered by man's interference. Diseases are not always "acts of God." Bacteria are capable of virtually infinite variety and adaptability. There were no "AIDS" viruses lurking under rocks in the Garden of Eden.

Today, "super bugs" gradually develop immunity to man's most powerful chemicals. Many reading this have experienced any number of infectious diseases, from an infected sinus to chronic bronchitis, and found that the antibiotics which seemed to "work" only a few years ago are no longer effective.

Warfare is certainly not an "act of God," but the insane means used by humans to enforce their wills on others. Wars are the result of human lust, ego, vanity, jealousy, and greed.

James wrote, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that

war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:1-3).

Describing our times; the times just before the Great Tribulation, Heavenly Signs (Revelation 6,7) and Day of the Lord, Jesus warned, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:6-8).

Since the end of World War II, during which about forty-five million people died, there have been more than sixty-five wars. Korea, Vietnam, and the war in the Gulf were major wars involving the United States. Then there was Grenada, Panama, and Haiti, not to mention Somalia, which was a massive troop movement under the aegis of humanitarianism.

Today, U.S. troops garrison hot spots the world over—in Bosnia, Korea, Germany, Haiti, Japan, and many other countries.

The mere "rumor of war" when Saddam Hussein ordered his army to conduct "war games" near the southern Iraqi border caused the dislocation of tens of thousands of U.S. troops, and the ordering of several U.S. carrier attack groups to the gulf.

The price tag for this, certainly soaring into the hundreds of millions if not into the billions of dollars, will probably never be known. Yet, it was another blow to an already shaky U.S. economy, merely because of a "rumor" of war.

The potential for violent war exists all over the world. Bosnia could erupt again at any time, especially in the harsh winter months. It could widen into a struggle between Serb-backed Russia and Iranian supported Muslims. If Turkey became involved, Greece would respond. Token U.S. troops are presently garrisoned in Macedonia, along the northern border of Greece with Bosnia. Greece and Turkey are ancient enemies; have warred over Cyprus and other areas. Again, religion and race are behind the hatreds. The Greeks are essentially Greek Orthodox, and nominally "Christian," and the Turks are Muslims.

A widening war in the Balkans is the last thing the pentagon or the U.S. government wants. It was a calculated risk to send U.S. troops into Bosnia, and "advisory" groups into Macedonia.

War could erupt at any time between China and Taiwan; between North and South Korea. Either event could bring about global repercussions, with Japan being deeply involved.

Massive civil war could erupt in Russia over recent elections. Millions of Russians remember the "good old days" under Stalin; want to return to total communism.

Of critical importance to the whole world, and of vital concern for any Christian who is truly watching, as Christ commanded, is what might take place in the Middle East in the near future. Few know how narrowly the powers involved in the Gulf War averted the nuclear destruction of Baghdad, and a widening war, in which the coalition forces would have disintegrated, and all arab nations would have turned on Israel.

It has been revealed by high-ranking Iraqi officials who defected that Saddam Hussein had chemical warheads fitted to some of his Scuds. Had he unleashed them on Israel, the Israeli Air Force was prepared to drop atomic bombs on Baghdad!

Frantic calls by then President George Bush averted it! Had not the U.S. immediately shipped Patriot anti-

missile batteries to Israel; had not the major thrust of the air war against Iraq been shifted from bombing the Republican Guard to Scud-hunting in the western Iraqi desert, Israel may well have attacked Iraq, with unimaginable consequences. More on these possibilities later.

As I write, I know it will be several weeks, if not a couple of months, before you will be reading these lines. By that time, any number of wars could have broken out, possibly civil war in Russia, possibly war in the Mideast!

True to the prophecies of Jesus Christ, just as many other calamities are occurring on this earth, we are living in a time of increasing "wars and rumors of wars."

"And There Shall Be Famines"

Massive famines grip many countries in the so-called "third world." Can anyone forget the major military effort made by the U.S. and UN forces to alleviate famine in Somalia?

As mentioned earlier, warfare causes famine and starvation, because it destroys infrastructure, brings about massive dislocation of populations—fleeing civilians who have no food or water. Famine and disease are automatically related.

Famine can occur from any one of several causes. Drought destroys crops, or prevents them from maturing and producing; floods destroy crops, and prolonged wet weather, as has occurred in the spring and early summer of 1996, prevents planting at the proper time. In Somalia, thousands died of starvation because the distribution of emergency food grains never reached remote areas.

There is also simple economic famine. millions of people in the so-called "developing" countries are chronically undernourished, which causes low resistance to disease and infant mortality.

The World Press Review, quoting from the prestigious Guardian in Britain, November, 1995, trumpeted, "Next, Wars over water!" The facts presented were shocking. Eighty countries are already experiencing water shortages that are threatening health and national economies, and nearly half of the population of the world has no access to clean water, or proper sanitation.

The demand for water because of exploding populations, has been doubling every twenty-one years. The water situation across North Africa and the Middle East was characterized as "precarious." Currently, serious drought grips Northern China, western and southern India, parts of Pakistan, and South America.

In some of the most populous cities in the world, water supply is becoming critical. The water table providing water for up to fifty large Chinese cities drops from three to six feet each year.

Even a cursory investigation of water supplies and management in the world would require several very lengthy articles. Waste, mismanagement, pollution, water disputes involving international borders, increased salinity, disappearance of underground aquifers all play a part in a mounting global water crisis.

The World Bank, on the eve of a "water conference" in Stockholm, Sweden, warned, "Wars of the next century will be over water."

To emphasize their warning, they cited how Egypt now fears appropriation of the waters of the Nile river by upstream Sudan and Ethiopia; how both Syria and Iraq are anxious over Turkish construction of dams along the headwaters of the Euphrates; how Hungary and Slovakia are arguing over a huge hydroelectric dam proposed on the Danube River, which is their common border.

As mentioned earlier, the Middle East and northern Africa are both critical water shortage areas. After Israel

diverted much of Jordan's water source, the famed River Jordan, the underground reserves of Jordanian water have been pumped virtually dry.

Cited by the World Bank as stark examples of waste were the fact that most city supply systems leak from 30 to 50 percent of their water underground; that most urban sewage all over the world passes untreated into rivers, thus not only polluting surface water, but wasting vast potential in recycled water.

They reported that "in Jordan 56% of water put into urban supplies does not reach customers," and said, "The Middle East is the likeliest crucible for future water wars."

The Economist, in Britain, in its issue of August 12, 1995, said, "The working assumption seems to be that it [water] is an unlimited public resource, and the result is that few consumers have any incentive to use it sparingly."

They warned that, "the time is coming when water must be treated as a valuable resource, like oil, not a free one like air."

Within only a few years, America's wheat and corn belt has gone from terrible floods to drought, and sometimes both have devastated farm and ranch lands at the same time, as occurred during the spring months of 1996.

Severe drought has gripped the "wheat belt" in some places for three straight years. Western Kansas, Nebraska, the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles and eastern Colorado experienced early freezes shortly after the 1996 crop was planted, then fifty-mile-per-hour winds caused further damage. The region has had only about one quarter the normal amount of rainfall, and the topsoil is dry. The effect is devastating to farmers.

There is a strong demand, worldwide, for the hard red winter wheat of America's wheat belt. The grain is used for bread, rolls, and all-purpose baking flour. As a result of increased demand and failing crops, wheat prices have almost doubled. The drought has a double effect on cattle growers, with ranch-land grasses turning brown and brittle, and the price of grain soaring.

In a domino-like effect, ranchers sell off cattle that are too expensive to raise; stockyards bulge with an oversupply, and beef prices drop to a nine-year low.

The drought may drive up to ten thousand farmers and ranchers in Oklahoma alone into bankruptcy, and the impact upon banks and state and federal governments is obvious.

In a recent special ABC television report, viewers were warned that "the Great Plains could turn into sand dunes." On the same program, scientists warned that "vast areas of farmland are vulnerable to becoming desert," and said "dust bowl days might be on their way back."

One-fifth of the United States was affected by the infamous "dust bowl" conditions of the 1930s. The program was chilling in its warning that this dry spell may be the "beginning of a mega-drought." Pictures were shown of Falcon Lake in southern Texas, which is forty-seven feet down; and of the ruins of whole towns, such as old Padilla in Tamaulipas, Mexico, which was abandoned so the waters of lake Vincente Guerrero could form a huge lake. The lake has so shrunk that old Padilla is now completely dry; buildings which were inundated now standing like ancient ruins in a parched landscape.

Former businesses such as fishing docks and marinas stood abandoned above the dry, cracked earth where a beautiful lake once lapped the shore.

"The drought is one of the worst on record," said Ray Motha, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. One official of the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau said "there was more rain during the Dust Bowl than

they are getting in Roosevelt County." The county is in the eastern plains of New Mexico, hard hit by drought.

Already, the extremely dry conditions have brought about earlier-than-usual fires in New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado.

When a devastating fire raced through northern New Mexico's Carson National Forest recently, an official of the U.S. Forest Service said, "We have kiddingly called the Carson the asbestos forest because it is always so wet and at such a high elevation that it never burns. With the Carson burning, and so early, that told us this was going to be a rough summer."

Every major weekly news magazine in the United States carried stories about the drought; about corn, wheat, and cattle prices. Is it only a passing phenomenon? Is it only "cyclical"? Perhaps. There have surely been droughts before; there have been floods before; there have been forest fires before. But when world conditions are added together; when every aspect of Christ's Olivet prophecy is taken as a whole; when we consider the implications of geopolitics and the condition of all nations politically, militarily, economically, and socially; when we truly watch world news, and observe the entire panorama of events, it is obvious all is not well with the world. major events are taking place which could well mean we are on the very brink of the Great Tribulation.

The prophecies of Amos could well be printed as today's news in many areas of the United States, and in many other countries, as well.

He said, "And I have also given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Eternal. And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Eternal. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Eternal" (Amos 4:6-9).

Plainly, God says He controls the weather. God can bless those who obey His laws and live according to His word, and curse those who do not.

Massive famines have occurred in the past, true. But Jesus Christ of Nazareth said all the events of the coming tribulation would happen at the same time. Make no mistake. Great drought and famine are in the offing, and it will not always be something Americans, Canadians, Britons, and others in the British Commonwealth will read about in their newspapers in some far away, overpopulated, third-world country like India or Bangladesh.

"And Pestilences..."

Christ said, "For there shall be wars and rumors of wars...and there shall be famines and pestilences..." (Matthew 24:6,7). Pestilences refers to any disease that spreads rapidly, and causes many deaths, such as smallpox, yellow fever, or the plague.

As was mentioned earlier, warfare often brings the terrible consequences of famine, disease, and starvation. When a nightmarish civil war erupted in Rwanda, terrified refugees fled to bordering Zaire; more than one hundred thousand died of cholera, resulting from the pollution of surface water by human waste. For the better part of fifty years, the developed nations have believed medical science had almost eradicated such diseases as typhoid fever, smallpox, cholera, and the plague.

Yet, such diseases are making a comeback. Always, it is the helpless civilians who suffer when maniacal

despots wage war, just as occurred in Rwanda and Bosnia.

Who has not heard about the Ebola virus and AIDS? Public awareness about pestilence was such that a motion picture starring Dustin Hoffman was made in the mid-1990s entitled *Outbreak*, and a made-for-TV thriller called *Virus* was created by Robin Cook. A documentary was produced about the same time called *The Hot Zone*, which is about the Ebola virus deaths in Zaire.

Only a few quotations from *The Hot Zone* are chilling: "Ebola was unpredictable. An airborne strain of Ebola could emerge and circle around the world in about six weeks, like the flu, killing large numbers of people...Ebola is a rather simple virus—as simple as a firestorm. It kills humans with swift efficiency and with a devastating range of effects."

Ebola crops up suddenly, and its victims bleed to death in a very few days. It was first identified in Germany, then, later versions of the virus cropped up in the Sudan, then in Zaire, then, shockingly, in Reston, Virginia.

The Hot Zone said, "The virus [the strain identified in Zaire] was not airborne—it traveled in blood, and the bleeding victim did not touch very many other people before dying, so the virus did not have many chances to jump to a new host. Had people been coughing the virus into the air [like the flu]...it would have been a different story." Frighteningly, when the leaders of a bizarre cult in Japan, responsible for releasing deadly Serin (a nerve gas) into crowded Tokyo subways, were arrested, it was revealed they had sent representatives to Zaire to deliberately cultivate the Ebola virus.

Would biological warfare be contemplated by demonic human leaders in waging war against others?

It has already been proven that such methods would be used by hate-filled despots. Such is the virulent hatred that motivates some human leaders that they would resort to any means, no matter how cruel, how heartless, in order to destroy any who would oppose them. Who can forget the pictures of the bloated bodies of Kurds—women, little children, helpless civilians—against whom Saddam Hussein of Iraq had used mustard gas? Such satanic cruelty is beyond the ability of any Christian person to contemplate.

Many countries have stores of biological weapons. Saddam Hussein was working on biological weapons. Robert Wright, who wrote an article entitled "Be Very Afraid" in *The New Republic* said, "Biological weapons are essentially devoid of international control, yet they're the scariest of the three [nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons]...Not futuristic, genetically engineered, genocidal viruses, though these may be along eventually, [but] plain old first-generation biological weapons...are the great unheralded threat to national security in the late 1990s."

U.S. intelligence documents released following the Gulf War prove that not only did Saddam Hussein possess biological and chemical weapons, but that his extended-range Scud missiles and aerial bombs had actually been loaded with biological agents and deployed on the battlefield.

Captured Iraqi documents and recently-released U.S. Intelligence reports prove that not only did Saddam possess such chemical and biological agents, but that he had ordered his field commanders to use them against Allied forces. His orders were not obeyed.

U.S. spy satellites had located no less than twenty-four chemical and biological decontamination sites installed by the Iraqis in southern Iraq and Kuwait. These were large washing sites for tanks, trucks, and personnel, should the Iraqis experience "blowback" from their own biological and chemical attacks, or should the Allies retaliate with their own biological and chemical weapons.

Some Gulf War veterans groups believe some 70,000 veterans and their dependents may be suffering today as a result of Allied bombing of Iraqi chemical and biological weapons sites. They believe such agents were released

into the atmosphere and dispersed over wide areas, and that low-level exposure resulted.

As early as June 1988, the U.S. government knew that Iraq was developing biological weapons; knew that Iraq was receiving toxic strains from a company in Rockville, Maryland, with export licenses approved by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Swiss and Italian firms were supplying Iraq with large-scale fermenters needed to grow toxic agents.

By the winter of 1990, the Pentagon knew that Iraq had succeeded in packing anthrax and botulinum toxins into aerial bombs. American commanders were warned that they might encounter such weapons on the battlefield. Network news featured pictures of U.S. tanks and troops fitted with anti-chemical and biological coverings; bulky, incredibly hot full-body suits and masks were shown being worn by some soldiers.

When the United Nations began inspecting Iraq after the war, they wanted to know what had happened to seventeen tons of biological growth media that Iraq had purchased in 1988 and 1989, but could no longer account for.

The New Republic reported in its January 29, 1996 issue, "The missing seventeen tons of media [biological cultures] could have grown enough biological agent to 'kill every man, woman and child on the face of the earth.'"

The Iraqis claimed the media had been destroyed during the Allied bombing. Had it? Of have the Iraqis successfully hidden it and other weapons of mass destruction?

It is scarcely crying "wolf! wolf!" to acknowledge the facts that have emerged from captured Iraqi documents, from Iraqi defectors, from U.S. intelligence spy satellites, and from UN specialists on the ground.

And which nation is more keenly aware, disturbed, concerned, and perhaps frightened about such a threat? Israel, naturally! It was Israel upon which Saddam Hussein unleashed a rain of Scud missiles. Had they contained chemical or biological warheads, the results would have been unimaginable! Hundreds of thousands or millions would have died! Israel would have dropped nuclear bombs on Baghdad and other Iraqi cities!

World War III, featuring all the horrible panoply of weapons—nuclear, chemical, biological—would have spread around the world. Perhaps some day we will learn just how close we came to such an event.

Germ warfare is without a doubt just over the horizon. Such would create a biological holocaust if ever unleashed. Both Time magazine and the prestigious British Economist reported in their July 1995 issues that Iraq had admitted to producing large quantities of biological weapons in 1989 and 1990. Be reminded that Saddam Hussein has already used nerve gas and mustard gas against his own citizens.

Newsweek, a couple of months later, reported the enormity of Saddam Hussein's plans: "For several days at the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991, the world stood on the brink of the first holocaust ever caused by biological weapons..."

They said the Iraqi arsenal contained "at least 25 missile warheads carrying about 11,000 pounds of biological agents, including powerful botulism poisons and the germs that cause anthrax. An additional 33,000 pounds of biological agents were placed into bombs to be dropped from airplanes...the result could have been as horrifying as Hiroshima or Nagasaki," wrote Newsweek's Christopher Dickey.

He said, "Anthrax and botulism were not the only germ weapons at Saddam's disposal...seven principal biological agents were actively tested for possible use, including viruses."

In 1993, the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment reported that 220 pounds of anthrax spores released from a plane flying over Washington D.C. might kill as many as 3 million people. A single Scud missile can carry twice that amount.

Time reported, September 4, 1995, "The Pentagon estimated that just one Scud missile filled with the toxin [botulinum] could contaminate 1,430 square miles."

John Donnelly of the Knight-Ridder Tribune News noted that "Anthrax is so infectious and lethal that it's stockpiled by several armies as a biological weapon. An accidental release of anthrax spores from a Soviet research center in 1979 killed hundreds: the Pentagon called it perhaps the world's most deadly biological agent."

Since Haiti is one of the hottest areas for infectious anthrax, perhaps it not so illogical that the government sought to stop illegal Haitians, many of whom were known to be HIV positive, from landing on America's shores.

Those who discount the frightening conditions on this earth today, who argue "there have always been diseases," or, "there have always been droughts and floods," simply miss the point.

Yes, there have "always been" diseases, droughts, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and other "natural" disasters. But have there "always" been nations feverishly working on stockpiling deadly toxins, anthrax spores, and viruses? Have there always been intercontinental ballistic missiles, and shorter range missiles, like the Chinese silkworm and the Scuds, which can deliver biological warheads hundreds, or thousands, of miles distant?

Meanwhile, the AIDS epidemic continues to spread, most recently making vast inroads into Asia. In the past twenty years, the virus has infected about twenty million people, most of whom are in Africa, but by the year 2000, it is estimated over forty million people will have AIDS!

There is no American who does not know there are political, racial, sociological, and religious consequences to the terrible scourge of AIDS. Too many famous people have died from the disease; too many famous living people have been reported as "HIV positive," and too many gay rights demonstrations have occurred for anyone to be completely ignorant of the spread of AIDS.

"AIDS was unique. It touched every nerve that polarized Americans: sex, homosexuality, race, Christian family values, drug addiction, and personal versus collective rights and security" (The Coming Plague, p. 319).

The same book reported, "By 1992, they [the World Health Organization] estimated 12.9 million worldwide had been infected with HIV, 2.7 million of whom had already developed AIDS. By the year 2000 a minimum of 38 million [other authorities estimate 40 million] people would have been infected with HIV, according to the Global AIDS Policy Coalition, but a more realistic projection is that this figure will be higher, perhaps up to 110 million. In that scenario, 24 million people would have died of AIDS between 1980 and 2000" (ibid. p. 486).

Today, AIDS is growing more rapidly among Asians than any other race. It is spreading more rapidly in southeast Asia than in any other part of the world.

The World Health Organization in Geneva "estimated the number of AIDS cases worldwide has risen by 60 percent...and predicted a continued explosive increase in Asia."

Shocking as it may sound, there were those who began spreading the absurd charge that AIDS was being deliberately spread by the government! Some few minorities began saying that the white race was spreading

AIDS among them in order to exterminate them! Such is the illogical panic that such dread diseases produces.

It is neither the government nor members of other races who force drug abuse and casual sex upon minorities. These are the two principal causes of the spread of AIDS; actual exchange of human bodily fluids and blood. If both of these major causes were removed; if mankind turned to God, and God's laws; if all casual sex, homosexuality, and drug abuse were halted tomorrow, then tomorrow would be the last time any new victim contracted AIDS.

Has AIDS always stalked mankind?

Have there always been enough nuclear weapons stockpiled to annihilate over twenty times the population of earth?

As mentioned earlier, the prophecies of Jesus Christ strongly indicate that all the things He said would come upon mankind during the Great Tribulation come at the same time.

"And Earthquakes, in Divers Places"

Christ said the Great Tribulation would also feature earthquakes in different places. We have been in a time of unusual earthquake activity all over the world. Who does not remember the massive quakes that have struck Los Angeles, collapsing major freeways and buildings; San Francisco, where many died, fires burned out of control, freeways collapsed, killing those underneath; in Kobe, Japan, where thousands died, and hundreds of thousands are still homeless.

Earthquakes have struck in Turkey, Peru, the Philippines, the United States, and in many other countries. Today, the "ring of fire," the continuous volcanic chain of mountains that stretches completely around the world, is becoming very active.

Mount Saint Helens was a major disaster. Other mountains along the American coastal Cascade range are showing signs of restiveness, including famed mount Rainier, overlooking Seattle.

References to Christ's predictions in His Olivet prophecy are not meant to be like childhood stories of "chicken little," who ran about saying, "The sky is falling, the sky is falling!" After all, there is nothing anyone can do about an earthquake, even though thousands have moved away from active faults, such as the famed San Andreas fault in California.

Actually, there is little, if anything, that anyone can "do" about any of the chilling warnings Jesus Christ issued except look into one's own life and make sure we are one of God's very elect!

God can, and will, protect His own elect from the nightmarish things coming upon this world; specifically, those things to come upon Jacob, the "lost ten tribes" of Israel.

One thing we must not do is set dates, try to engage in elaborate chronological schemes, decide we know within a month or two in advance when major events will occur, and then make foolish decisions, like fleeing to some remote place and becoming "survivalists."

Religious people have forecast very elaborate prophetic scenarios in the past. Some have actually attempted to foretell the day of Christ's return, and then, when the "great disappointment" occurred, many people turned away in disgust.

Religious fanatics have caused people to sell their homes and businesses, gather together in some hideout or

retreat, and then await some great event—all to no avail.

Christ encourages His servants to watch and to pray always, "that ye might be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). His emphasis was on watching, on praying, and on being accounted worthy. It is up to God Almighty to provide deliverance or escape.

Near the end of the Olivet prophecy, Jesus said, "And when these things begin to come to pass [all the terrible things He had predicted in this lengthy prophecy], then look up, and lift up your heads [don't hang them down in terror, fear, or deep depression]; for your redemption draweth nigh!" (Luke 21:28).

The Great tribulation is coming as a result of man's governments, man's attempts to govern himself apart from the laws of God. There is nothing "religious" about terrible droughts, or floods, or tornadoes, or hurricanes, or earthquakes, or famines, or disease epidemics. There is nothing "religious" about warfare except that hate-filled religious fanatics sometimes precipitate wars.

There is nothing "cultic" about reading your daily newspapers, watching major television news, reading weekly news magazines, and watching world events, comparing how all this might lead into events Christ said would bring about the Great Tribulation, the Heavenly Signs, the Day of the Lord, and His glorious return to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Yes, Christ's prophecies contain a lot of bad news. There is nothing good about droughts, disease, famine, and war! But there is great, wonderful good news beyond it all—the best news mankind could ever hear; that God will intervene in time; that because of the "very elect" of God, mankind will not perish from this earth; God will stop the terrible wars that are coming, saving mankind from himself!

No one in the Intercontinental Church of God, believes we must gather together in some place and "flee" somewhere or other. God was able to protect Israel in their own homes in Goshen!

The main purpose for Christ's servants to watch is so they can warn others! The warning of Ezekiel, as the "watchman" of Israel, was directly from God, Who said, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Jesus Christ does not want His servants doing the exact opposite of what He taught! He said, "Therefore take no [anxious] thought, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or, 'Wherewithal shall we be clothed?' (For after all these things do the nations seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:31,32).

He said His people should face each problem as it comes, on a daily basis, living one day at a time. "Take therefore no thought [anxious thought] for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34).

Christ did not contradict Himself!

He said, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not [when you least expect it!], the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:42,46).

What wondrous words! This is the crux of the matter! Jesus Christ does not reveal His plans to His servants so they will flee like bleating sheep in all directions; so they will get "spooky" about signs, or chronology, or history, or elaborate prophetic scenarios, or imagined evils! No, He expects them to be engaged in patient continuance, in "so doing" His work, just like a faithful servant who is over his Lord's household!

There is no concept here of preparing a cadre of Christ's "very elect" so they can creep into caves and sit on the sidelines while their families, their friends, their communities, their cities, their states, their nations, and the rest of mankind are enmeshed in the horrors of the Great Tribulation! Christ is not training people so they can retire!

His warning about the terrible things to happen is so we will be watching, praying, living a life of overcoming (Revelation 2:26), and "so doing" the Lord's work!

His warning is not meant to terrorize His own servants, but to inform them! It is not meant to make them feel time is closing in on them, but to make them understand time is opening up before them; that Christ's Kingdom is soon to come; that their children and grandchildren will have a fabulous, peaceful, joyous, happy life in the world of tomorrow!

So remember, as you read of the terrible news of man's misrule; of man's vanity, jealousy and greed; as you read of the many events which will finally coalesce into the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord—the end result of it all is the second coming of Jesus Christ! Now, armed with those positive thoughts, take a look at more of this present evil world, and why we may be on the very cusp of the Great Tribulation which is to come!

Nuclear Proliferation

With the end of the "cold war," millions in the western world breathed a collective sigh of relief. At last, a moment-by-moment threat of nuclear annihilation seemed over.

The Soviet Union and the United States signed a series of test-ban treaties. Notwithstanding this, France continued with its nuclear testing in the South Pacific, and China has been conducting nuclear tests all along.

The problem is that as Russia and the U.S. downsize their nuclear arsenals (to about 3,500 warheads each), there is the difficulty in dismantling all those ICBMs and IRBMs—what to do with the deadly materials.

As *The Economist* reported in June of 1995, "Ways must also be found to get rid of Russia's 170 tons of weapons-grade plutonium. Russia would like to build a plant to make it into mixed-oxide fuel (MOX) for use in reactors. An alternative idea is to send it to Germany, which has a MOX plant standing idle because of local opposition to it. Might the locals feel better about their plant working for the disarmament cause?" (emphasis mine).

In the spring of 1995, U.S. negotiators finally persuaded 170 countries to sign agreements that would extend indefinitely the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). However, what worries many western intelligence communities is what happens when a nuclear power, like Russia, begins to disintegrate economically and politically. What happens then to all the tens of thousands of nuclear weapons and thousands of tons of bomb grade plutonium?

U.S. experts in the civilian Ministry of Atomic Energy charge that security is so lax in the former Soviet Union that theft of weapons grade nuclear materials is happening with frightening regularity.

Nearly every U.S. specialist dealing with the issue has his own horror story to tell. When Charles Curtis of the U.S. Energy Department was visiting a building of the Kurchatov Institute in a Moscow suburb, he saw that about 160 pounds of weapons-grade uranium cast into tiny spheres was stored in high-school type lockers, and secured only by a small chain on their handles.

Newsweek magazine reported in July, 1995, that "William Potter, who tracks nuclear thefts for the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California, was transfixed by a Russian Navy investigator's report on the theft of almost 10 pounds of enriched uranium from one of the Russian Navy's main storage facilities for nuclear fuel, the Sevmorput shipyard outside Murmansk. The thief had climbed through one of the many holes in the wooden fence surrounding the fuel-storage area, sawed through a padlock on the warehouse door, lifted the lid on a container and broken off three pieces of a submarine reactor core." The investigator told Potter, "Potatoes were guarded better."

The article went on to reveal that the CIA has documented thirty-one cases of thefts or seizures, most involving low-grade Russian materials found by German police.

"In Prague last December, police found almost six pounds of highly enriched uranium in the back seat of a Saab; also in the car were a Czech nuclear scientist and two colleagues from Belarus and Ukraine."

Charles B. Hanley, special correspondent for the Associated Press, reporting from Prague, wrote, "What Czech police seized that day last December, along with three alleged smugglers, was a pair of metal canisters, crudely fashioned, wrapped in plastic, tossed in the Saab's back seat. They were loaded with six pounds of granulated doom—2.73 kilograms of nearly pure uranium 235, one-third of a Hiroshima bomb's worth" (reported Sunday, March 26, 1995 in the South Bend Tribune).

Germany has been increasingly in the news as a hot bed of illicit nuclear smuggling. There were 182 cases in Germany alone involving illegal dealing in radioactive materials in 1994. Louis Freeh, FBI director, said nuclear smuggling presents "the greatest long-term threat to the security of the United States."

Obviously, police and other officials (Germany established a "nuclear office" with a staff of twenty in November, 1994) know they are intercepting only the "top of the iceberg." Just as in the U.S. drug trade, for every arrest much more material gets through than is intercepted.

Where does it go? The police don't know. A top German investigator admitted, "In these cases, for this kind of material, there could be buyers. But we don't know who they are."

What the government does know is that Libya's Kadaffy has repeatedly tried to purchase nuclear material; that Iraq may still have secret stores, a secret program; that Pakistan may have material and equipment to produce up to twenty-five nuclear bombs, some within hours; that North Korea may have enough material for two or three nuclear bombs; that Argentina, although a signitor to the non-proliferation treaty, had a nuclear program in its early stages; that Iran is pursuing a secret nuclear program, even though it is believed they are some years away from producing a bomb.

Currently, Russia has about 10,000 nuclear warheads deployed, although they are not, according to treaties, "aimed at the United States." One wonders how long it takes to program the computerized aiming devices. Minutes? An hour? Of those missiles, 2,560 are aboard submarines, 6,078 are land-based, and 1,410 are on bombers.

The United States has 8,500 deployed, 2,090 on land, and slightly more aboard U.S. nuclear-powered submarines. France, China, and Britain all have nuclear weapons deployed both on land and aboard submarines and bombers, and Israel has an estimated fifty to one hundred nuclear bombs capable of being fired from Jericho I and II rockets. India has the capability for eighty nuclear missiles with their Agni/Prithvi rockets, and Pakistan is believed to have capability for fifteen to twenty, using Chinese-made M-11 missiles.

What concerns western governments most today is not a nuclear showdown between superpowers, as it used to be during the Cold War, but that ingredients for an A-bomb could leak out of Russia (and probably already

have), and fall into the hands of terrorists.

As the beleaguered population of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv well know, some terrorists cheerfully turn themselves into human bombs, blowing themselves to bits along with their victims. With nuclear components now capable of being carried about in a couple of suitcases, the day of the deliberate triggering of an atomic bomb by terrorists may not be many years into the future.

Officials know that the long road to building nuclear bombs via breeding reactors and enrichment plants is a very difficult one. But the theft of primary materials, which have already been turned into weapons-grade by the former Soviet Union, short-circuits any such process. As Newsweek's John Barry said, "history has turned the nuclear threat on its head, and the terrorist scenario has become frighteningly real."

Man has never invented a weapon he has not used. Though the sheer horror of atomic weapons brought about nuclear stalemate, the insane arms race proceeded to bankrupt the Soviet Union, and, if the truth were known, to catapult the United States from the world's greatest creditor nation to the world's greatest debtor. Countless hundreds of billions have been spent, not only by the two superpowers of the '50s to the '90s, but by France, Britain, and many other nations. For decades, American governments frantically spent billions on ever more efficient weapons of all kinds.

Each new development in missile, aircraft, submarine, or any other kind of military technology by the Soviet Union brought about an instant demand for matching technology in the west, and vice-versa. For decades, ever more effective weapons were developed. Today, abandoned missile silos, huge weaponry boneyards in America's western desert loaded with thousands of obsolete aircraft, rusting or dismantled aircraft carriers, and dangerous stockpiles of poison gas, along with other chemical or biological agents, gives testimony to the insanity of the arms race. It was the Reagan administration's intent to spend billions on anti-missile technology (billed "Star Wars" by the media) that finally made Soviet leaders realize they could no longer keep matching vast U.S. expenditures (on borrowed money) for military research and development.

Today, with the vast arsenal of nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union now in the hands of several different sovereign nations; with more and more nations gaining nuclear technology; with illegal trade in nuclear components occurring with frightening regularity; with third-world countries like Pakistan arming themselves with nuclear bombs; and with the specter of nuclear weapons of suitcase-size in the hands of fanatical terrorists, there is little reason to believe the threat of nuclear attack is over.

Again, there is nothing whatsoever you and I can "do" about such things. We can only do as Christ commands, "watch ye therefore, and pray always that ye might be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36). We can only write, and speak, and preach, and talk to others, trying to inform them, trying to convey not only a witness and a warning, but the great good news of Christ's gospel of the Kingdom as well!

Following His prophecies of war, famine, disease, and religious martyrdom, Jesus Christ became very specific about a major sign for which His servants are to watch.

**"When Ye Therefore Shall See
the Abomination of Desolation"**

Christ and His disciples were seated on the Mount of Olives, just across from the temple mount. They only had to turn their heads to see the temple, gleaming in the distance.

There could have been no doubt whatsoever in the minds of His disciples what He meant when he spoke of the "holy place."

Notice: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand:) [Matthew inserted parenthetically] "Then let them which be in Judaea [the Roman province around Jerusalem] flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight [those who are in Judaea; those who would WALK to safety] be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day: For then shall be GREAT TRIBULATION, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:15-21).

As Matthew warned, let us understand what Jesus said.

Daniel's prophecy spoke of Antiochus Epiphanes who appears as a type of the coming beast power of prophecy. Daniel wrote, "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength [in the temple of God], and shall take away the daily sacrifice [which the Levites offered in the temple], and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate" (Daniel 11:31).

Antiochus occupied Jerusalem, then sacrificed swine to "Jupiter Olympus" in the holy of holies, thus fulfilling in prior type the prophecy of the setting up of "the abomination of desolation."

An abomination is something that is detestable, despicable in God's sight. As a result, it brings about "desolation," or waste, and destruction. Kitto's Bible Cyclopaedia says, "The abomination of the desolator, which, without doubt, means the idol or idolatrous apparatus which the desolator of Jerusalem should establish in the holy place. This appears to have been a prediction of the pollution of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, who caused an idolatrous altar to be built on the altar or burnt offerings, whereupon unclean things were offered to Jupiter Olympius, to whom the temple itself was dedicated. Josephus distinctly refers to this as the accomplishment of Daniel's prophecy" (Kittos' Encyclopedia of Biblical Literature, Vol. 1, p. 22).

Of the later typical fulfillment following the time of Christ, Kitto wrote that the setting up of Roman standards over the eastern gate leading to the temple (which had been destroyed) and the soldiers offering sacrifices to them constituted an "abomination of desolation."

"Nor was this [the roman standards] the last appearance of the 'abomination of desolation,' in the holy place for, not only did Hadrian, with studied insult to the Jews, set up the figure of a boar over the Bethlehem gate of the city [which was then named "Aelia Capitolina"] which rose upon the site and ruins of Jerusalem, but he erected a temple to Jupiter upon the site of the Jewish temple, and caused an image of himself to be set up in the part which answered to the most holy place" (ibid. p. 23).

Daniel's prophecy is one of the most intricately detailed in all the bible. The eleventh chapter is the longest single prophecy in the Bible. Toward the end of the eleventh chapter, which leads into the prophecy of the Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:1 with Matthew 24:21,22), the time of the end is portrayed.

Daniel wrote, "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him [the king of the north]: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships: and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over" (Daniel 11:40).

The prior typical fulfillment of these verses did not take place "at the time of the end"! That is our time, now! From the time Daniel's eleventh chapter introduces Antiochus Epiphanes, the personality of the "vile person" who is the "king of the north" never changes. Antiochus succeeded Heliodorus, who was a tax collector. Hitler succeeded the "Hohenzollern" family of Germany. The name "Hohenzollern" means "tax collector."

Speaking of Antiochus, who seems like a type of Adolph Hitler, Daniel wrote, "And in his [Heliodorus'] estate

shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries" (Daniel 11:21).

Hitler did not obtain the chancellorship of Germany by a military coup, but by his flattering rhetoric about "pure Aryan blood" and the Germans being a "super race." The German aristocracy and most of the higher officers in the German army loathed Hitler in the beginning.

In a shadowy forerunner of Daniel's prophecy about the "king of the north" moving into Palestine in a war against the "king of the south," Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935. Within only a few years, Hitler's armies invaded north Africa, and Rommel's panzers were deep inside Egypt, heading toward Alexandria. The specter of the axis powers controlling Middle-eastern oil and the Suez canal, so vital to Britain's survival, brought about the joint efforts of the U.S. and Britain to drive Rommel from Egypt and Africa. Alexander's British Eighth Army began pushing Rommel back out of Egypt; Americans and free French landed in north Africa, and began fighting their way toward the east. Eventually, the Germans were driven from Africa.

Just as the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 71 was a forerunner of the end-time destruction Jesus prophesied, so these events were but a forerunner of the end-time prophecy of Daniel.

Notice that the king of the north is to invade Palestine. "He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom [Turkey], and Moab [probably Iraq], and the chief of the children of Ammon [Amman is the capital city of Jordan]. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps [on his borders]. But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: [eastward lies China, and northward lies Russia]: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace [his headquarters; his principal seat of government] between the seas [the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea] in the glorious holy mountain [Jerusalem]: yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him" (Daniel 11:40-45).

It is not clear just yet who is meant by the "king of the south." At this moment in time, with a new government in Israel, and an emergency Arab summit meeting just concluded in Cairo, it appears Hosni Mubarak of Egypt is attempting to emerge as power broker among the Arab nations.

Obviously, the "king of the north" invades the Middle East, overruns Palestine, sets up his principal place of government in Jerusalem, and also invades Egypt. Yet, it appears Turkey, perhaps Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan, are not involved.

When are these events to occur?

"And at the time of the end," says Daniel. It is men who divided the Bible into chapters and verses. Daniel 12 continues right on: "And at that time [the time of the invasion of the middle east by this northern power] shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble [the Great Tribulation], such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (verse 1).

Christ spoke of a time of trouble that was worse than any time in history; worse than any time before or since. The time of trouble spoken of by Daniel takes place in the Mideast—in Jerusalem, and in Palestine! It is a time of massive invasion by the king of the north who sets up his "palaces" or his principal place of government in Jerusalem.

Notice the twofold nature of Christ's prophecy about the specific great events which signal the beginning of the Great Tribulation: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet,

stand in the holy place...then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains...for then shall be Great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:15-22).

Then, Christ said, "And when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (Luke 21:20). Armies cause the desolation, or destruction. a great false prophet will come on the scene, and an idolatrous abomination is to be set up under the protection of powerful military forces.

Notice, in Luke's parallel account of Christ's Olivet prophecy, that religious martyrdom immediately precedes the setting up of the abomination of desolation and the surrounding of Jerusalem by powerful armies. Read Matthew 24:9-11 with Luke 21:16-20.

Notice that it is when the abomination is set up and when armies surround Jerusalem that they which live in Judaea are warned to "flee into the mountains" (Matthew 24:16; Luke 21:21).

This does not say to people in Spokane, Washington, Ft. Myers, Florida, or Ojai, California, that they are to flee to the Jordanian desert. It specifically says "they which be in Judaea."

Now what events would bring about the occupation of Israel—not by nearby Arab states, who themselves are invaded by occupied by the king of the north—but by a northern power, who is one of the successors to the "beast" power of history?

Remember, two key events are to take place:

(1) An abominable, blasphemous, idolatrous thing is to be set up "in the holy place," probably meaning the temple in Jerusalem.

(2) Armies will surround Jerusalem after having attacked "many countries," including Egypt.

But before an "abomination of desolation" can stand "in the holy place," there must be a holy place!

Today, the famous Dome of the Rock stands on the Temple Mount. Adjacent to it is the Al Aksa mosque. We have written extensively, as well as produced many television programs, about the avowed intention of various Jewish religious organizations to build the third Temple.

I have in my possession a finely-printed, glossy, full-color table-top book entitled, *The Odyssey of the Third Temple*. On the overleaf, one reads, "The Odyssey of the third Temple emphasizes the central role which the Holy Temple occupies in the life of the Jewish people and all mankind...It also clearly demonstrates how the commandment of God to build the temple is the central theme of Judaism. More than any other previously published work, 'Odyssey' proves that the eternal commandment to build the Holy Temple is alive and well in Jerusalem...waiting to be fulfilled by the Jewish people."

There are hundreds of illustrations; pictures of many kinds of pots and brazen vessels already constructed for temple worship; artist's renderings of sacrifices in progress; even a list of suggested donations and costs for various objects, so that Zionist Jews can contribute to the building of a temple. That this is a serious effort to build a temple is strikingly obvious from this very expensive book. On page 104 it says, "The Temple Institute of Jerusalem was founded on the principle of action. Its goal is to provide a basis in research, planning and infrastructure for the third temple."

Detailed are plans for restoring Levitical music and musical instruments, construction of special vessels, the weaving of priestly garments (much of this is on display in Jerusalem), the purchase of the precious stones and metals for the breastplate of the high priest, and the creation of the "book of the sanctuary."

The book is obviously a very impressive attempt at fund-raising. At its conclusion it states, "Therefore, whoever

is inspired and motivated to do something for the Temple, may bring the message of the Temple Institute to the attention of others: that an opportunity exists to contribute towards the hour of building the Temple in Jerusalem" (p. 110, emphasis mine).

The institute was created by Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, who served in the paratrooper brigade which liberated the Temple Mount in the Six-Day war of 1967, and was one of the first soldiers to reach the Mount.

Of course this institute is not by any means the only Jewish organization urging that a third temple be built. When Gershom Solomon (whose interview appears in the brochure, Will a Temple Soon Be Built in Jerusalem?) attempted with some of his followers to lay a symbolic cornerstone some years ago, riots broke out. Many young Arabs were killed, and the infamous "Intifada", or Arab boycott of Israel, began.

Along with it, many acts of terrorism occurred, and continue to occur to this day.

The five tons of explosives that were detonated in Saudi Arabia recently illustrates the point.

Though the motives of the terrorists who bombed a building housing U.S. Air Force personnel in Saudi Arabia may be mixed, there is little doubt that the U.S. is seen by Islamic extremists as the "great Satan," while Israel is characterized as the "little Satan." As mentor of Israel, and sponsor of democracy throughout the world, the U.S. is viewed with virulent hatred by such extremists.

Terrorists who bombed the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Lebanon years ago succeeded in driving the U.S. from Lebanon. This stark lesson has not been lost on the terrorists of today. They actually believe that governments can be forced to bow to their will, change policies, abandon allies, trade land for peace—whatever, if they can make day to day life miserable enough for their enemies.

The two major targets for terrorist attacks today are Israel and the United States.

Do not doubt that the bombing in Saudi Arabia will strengthen, rather than weaken, Benjamin Netanyahu's insistence on "security first" in any peace negotiations in the Middle East.

A New Government in Israel

Benjamin Netanyahu was elected as Israel's prime minister because he essentially promised the Israeli people four things.

- (1) The future of Jerusalem is not negotiable. Jerusalem will remain an integrated city, the capital of Israel.
- (2) The Golan Heights (above the Sea of Galilee, along Israel's border with Syria) will remain in Israeli hands. They are not negotiable.
- (3) The Jewish settlements (on the West Bank and elsewhere, towns and villages built to house immigrants in what was once Jordanian or Syrian-held land) will not be abandoned, but will be continued.
- (4) There will never be a separate, sovereign "Palestinian State."

Yet, the so-called "peace process" begun by assassinated former Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin was leading, in a slow-paced, steady manner, toward ultimate negotiations on every one of these points. The entire process was aimed at "trading land for peace," just as Israel gave back the Sinai to Egypt.

In a recent emergency summit of Arab leaders in Cairo, each one of the four points mentioned above were absolutely insisted upon by all the Islamic nations.

- (1) They demand that a sovereign, separate Palestinian State be created.
- (2) They demand that the Old City of Jerusalem become its capital.

(3) They demand that existing settlements be abandoned and destroyed, and that no new settlements be constructed.

(4) They demand that Israel return the Golan heights to Syria.

In an interview with CNN, Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak emphasized each one of these four points. Though he claimed to be "optimistic" regarding Netanyahu's new government; though he spoke of meeting with President Clinton, and, later, with Netanyahu himself, he nevertheless made it clear that all the Arab nations are united in their demands regarding those four points.

One of the leading spokespersons for the PLO, Hannah Ashwari, was even more direct. She told CNN that it was "absolutely inevitable" that Jerusalem would become the capital of a Palestinian State.

An official high in the Syrian government said, "We have been weak. But we shall become stronger. And when we are strong enough, we shall force the Israelis to withdraw from the Golan."

Strikingly, while the Arab summit was in progress in Cairo, the European Union issued a plain warning to Israel's new government that the "peace process must continue!"

This is new!

Never before have you heard that Europe is now beginning to use political muscle, becoming involved in events in Israel and the Mideast!

Study those four points above. Wildly cheering Israelis elected a new prime minister because of his very specific promises involving those four points! Tens of thousands of Russian immigrants now form a significant voting bloc.

Those Russian Jews want the settlements to continue.

Two very large Jewish religious parties gained a significant number of seats in the Israeli Parliament, the "Knesset." Because of his narrow margin of victory, Netanyahu will be forced to listen to them.

The world needs to recognize, as it speaks vainly of "peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 8:11), that there is war ahead in the Middle East!

Now, what great events could bring about the building of a temple? What would cause a European power to intervene in the Middle East? Who, or what power, will set up the abomination of desolation?

The Specter of War

The major industrial powers of the world anxiously want peace in the Middle East. Is there anyone who does not remember the apocalyptic scenes on global television of hundreds of Kuwaiti oil wells burning; of vast seas of oil dumped into the Gulf, killing fish and birds, befouling miles and miles of shoreline, threatening fresh water plants?

The last thing in the world the European Union wants is warfare in the Mideast! Major pipelines run from Saudi Arabia across Jordan and Israel to the Mediterranean. Oil is produced in the Sinai, in all the Gulf states. One of the most chilling scenarios in the past years, including the protracted war between Iraq and Iran, was the sinking of a supertanker in the narrow Straits of Hormuz, blocking tanker access to Gulf ports.

The United States knows, as does Europe, that if Israeli citizens were to die in chemical, biological, or nuclear attack, Israel would retaliate with nuclear weapons!

Many years ago, a retired Israeli Air Force general was overlooking Jerusalem as his aircraft came in for a landing. He was being interviewed by a journalist who recorded his words. In effect, he said, "Before we Jews would ever again be herded into cattle cars to be taken to the ovens, we would pull down the temple of humanity!"

Obviously, he was referring to blinded Samson, who pulled down the pillars supporting a large building where his tormentors stood, jeering. By this suicidal act, Samson killed more people in his death than he did during his life (Judges 16:30).

Obviously, he was implying Israel, through the use of nuclear weapons, has the capacity to do just that!

It is now known that Saddam Hussein did possess chemical and biological weapons. Captured Iraqi documents and information from high-level defectors has corroborated this. It is also known, in spite of U.S. media reports to the contrary, that Saddam had warheads containing biological and chemical materials affixed to Scuds, and to aerial bombs.

What is not known is how many other Islamic states, from Saudi Arabia to Libya, from Syria to Iran, have their own stocks of such horrifying weapons.

As was covered much earlier, if a single light plane, flying over a large city, could cause the death of countless thousands by spraying anthrax, then what could missiles do if they showered hundreds of canisters that were set to explode in the air over major population centers?

Today, the Arab nations act, in their pronouncements and warnings, as if Netanyahu had not been elected! Their demands are that he continue the very peace process of his predecessor, when his campaign rhetoric was very much against that process!

Each one of the Arab spokespersons interviewed reiterated the same four points mentioned above! Yet, it is the utter intractability of the Israeli government on those points which forms the very basis of Netanyahu's new government!

Do you see any room for negotiation in those stated positions?

Obviously not. Yet, all speak of "peace," and say they are "optimistic." Arab leaders, following their major summit in Cairo, issued statements about the "peace process" which sounded for all the world like they believed Perez had won, instead of Netanyahu. It was as if they brushed aside the very campaign issues that propelled Netanyahu into office, and began making it known they expected the new Israeli government to continue the previous government's policies.

They say "peace," and talk of the "peace process." But, with the intractable demands by the PLO and all the Arab states that Israel "trade land for peace," and Israel saying "not one inch!" there is little hope for peace in the region.

Rather, it is only a matter of time until war breaks out once again in the Middle East.

How will it come? Almost weekly, we read of Israeli Air Force planes and Israeli artillery retaliating against Hezbollah villages and camps in southern Lebanon, after ambushes of Israeli soldiers or terrorist attacks against civilians are carried out. It is as if a state of war already exists, but in a limited sense.

If a major war were to begin, and if, this next time, chemical or biological (or both) weapons were used against Israel, there would very likely be nuclear retaliation by Israel against its enemies.

In a frenzy of anti-Arab hatred, the mosques in Jerusalem could be dynamited and bulldozed to the ground.

In a national outcry, mourning thousands and tens of thousands of their dead, the populace might heed the constant demand by several of the religious parties (who now have a much stronger voice in the parliament) that a temple be built!

The deeply wounded nation might well attempt to repeat the example of Josiah; turn back to the God of Israel as best they know how, in hopes that God will deliver them from certain destruction!

In the event of a large-scale war against Israel, it is quite possible frenzied Israelis might destroy the mosques. That would so enrage all the Arab states that the entire Middle East would erupt in large-scale warfare; this time, in an attempt to literally annihilate the Jews, drive them "into the sea," as many Arab states, particularly the Palestinians, have said ever since the Jewish state was established in 1948.

It is also possible that a temple could be built alongside the mosques, leaving them relatively undisturbed.

It is also possible that a symbolic corner stone could be laid, and that a dedication ceremony could occur. Even this event could trigger a massed Arab military response.

Whether war comes from an Arab attack from without, triggered by Israeli actions (or inaction, in the case of "land for peace"), or whether the Israelis themselves decide to drive deeper into southern Lebanon, war will eventually come to the Middle East—to Jerusalem—again!

Jesus Christ said so!

How the Great Tribulation Will Begin

In the event of major chemical, biological, and/or nuclear attacks in the Middle East, the whole world would be involved!

Europe depends to a large extent on Mideastern oil, just as does the United States, Japan, and much of the industrialized world!

Faced with disruption or destruction of oil-producing and shipping facilities, the major powers would be forced to intervene.

The United States, even today, could not risk a unilateral "invasion" of any Arab state. George Bush's "coalition" was a very risky, very delicate matter of balancing many different suspicions and hatreds; of extremely difficult negotiations. Egyptian forces, for example, were not placed where they would be killing brother Arabs. Though Kuwaiti forces were allowed to enter Kuwait City first, other Arab forces did not invade Kuwait, or Iraq.

Major British forces were involved in the Gulf War. Germany sent minesweepers to the eastern Mediterranean, and contributed other token forces, but was not involved either in the bombing campaign or in the ground war.

Next time, it will be different. Within only a few years, we may see another terrible war in the Mideast. This time with European forces intervening—perhaps occupying Israel and attacking Egypt (Daniel 11:40-45)—in order to prevent a global nuclear war from breaking out, or halting a war in the region after nuclear weapons have once again been used.

Which nation could gain the most from appearing as the savior of Israel but Germany, as if in atonement for the

holocaust of World War II?

Which nations could guarantee the safety of the world's most prestigious and most popular religious figure, if he decided to go to Jerusalem?

What if this "vicar of Christ," who would be viewed as a "prince of peace" were to ensconce himself in a newly-built temple? What if he were to have such power that great signs, wonders, and miracles were performed? What if his very presence there halted a major war already in progress? Read all of 2 Thessalonians 2 slowly and carefully.

Paul wrote, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the coming of Jesus Christ] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4).

The "man of sin" who claims to "be God" is the prophesied "antichrist," the great "false prophet" who is in collusion with the beast power. He is prophesied to "sit in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God!"

The "little horn" of Daniel 7 is the very same person as the antichrist, or the "man of sin," called the "son of perdition."

Daniel saw the fourth beast as "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns" (Daniel 7:7). This was the last of the four great world-ruling empires depicted in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. It is the same beast as that of Revelation 13, which embodies all the strongest characteristics of its predecessors.

A vast majority of Bible scholars know that Daniel's prophecy identified the ancient Babylonian, Persian, Greco/Macedonian, and Roman empires. Most of them know that the successive stages of the so-called "Holy Roman Empire" are meant by the ten successive (not contemporaneous) governments of that system revealed in Daniel 7:7-10.

The little horn is a great church/state religious system, called "Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17:1-5). It is a mystery religion, one that is actually a state, and has concourse with many nations.

Notice: "I considered the horns [symbols of governments], and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots [the Ostrogoths, Vandals and Heruli were overthrown by the Vatican]: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit [a picture of the second coming of Christ, and the judgment of God], whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels are burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The judgment was set, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:8-10).

When does the little horn speak great things? Notice that this prophecy leads directly to the time of the second coming of Christ!

John wrote of the same thing: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon" (Revelation 13:11).

This lamb-like beast speaks as Satan, yet "appears" Christ-like. It masquerades as "Christian," but is led by Satan.

"And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast [he uses the power of the state—military and political] before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (Revelation 13:11,12).

The deadly wound was the collapse of Rome in A.D. 476. The "deadly wound was healed" when the empire was restored by Belasarius in A.D. 554.

This Christ-like beast is the same as the little horn which speaks great things, the same as the "man of sin" of 2 Thessalonians the second chapter, the same as the Antichrist.

Notice: "And he [the lamb-like beast which speaks as Satan] doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast..." (Revelation 13:13,14).

Just as Daniel's prophecy shows the little horn to be destroyed by Christ at His coming, so Paul wrote, of this man of sin who will appear in the temple of God, "And then shall that wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10).

This great false prophet is seized by Jesus Christ Himself at His second coming, and thrown into Gehenna fire!

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse [Jesus Christ], and against His army. And the beast [the coming military dictator over the final ten nations comprising the beast power—see Revelation 17:12-14] was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Revelation 19:19,20).

Obviously, the final fulfillment of the "abomination of desolation" will be in human form, not as an idol, or the sacrifice of unclean animals.

This time, it is a false prophet who shall "think to change times and laws," and who has a "mouth speaking great things," who will have the power to call down fire from heaven to deceive the world. The blasphemous abomination which will stand in the holy place where it ought not will be the little horn, the Antichrist, the false prophet who is in collusion with the beast power.

When this occurs, millions will believe it is God incarnate who sits in the Temple; millions will be deceived. All but the "very elect," that is. Such an occurrence is not something which would affect the United States alone. All of Europe, all of Central and South America, all of the nominal "Christian" world would be directly affected. Hundreds of millions of those who have been among the protesting "daughters" of the great harlot church (Revelation 17:5-18) will recant when they see such things!

Millions will then go right back into the great false church, believing that God incarnate is sitting on a throne in the Temple! These events will appear to be as a wondrous salvation to the millions. They will not view it as an evil thing, but as if God Himself had intervened to prevent the annihilation of Israel, and of the entire human race!

This event would occur as a move toward halting massive war in the Mideast. It would occur as a move to save the remaining Israeli population. It would occur as a move toward world peace. This great false prophet would

be looked upon as the "Prince of Peace" by adoring millions in many, many nations.

By the time this occurs, the United States of America may be so deeply in the grips of the many other phases of the Great Tribulation that it will be unable to intervene, militarily, or in any other way.

Something is going to bring about the setting up of the abomination of desolation, which is twofold—an abomination standing in the holy place, and "Jerusalem surrounded by armies."

Perhaps the aforementioned scenarios will not play out as it appears they might. They are certainly not the only possibilities. But major events seem heading in such directions, and it behooves God's people to watch conditions; to be alert, to be aware, and to be engaged in the work of God of witness and warning so that others might also be aware, and take the actions in their own personal lives that are necessary.

No one needs to know dozens of intricate details about Bible prophecy in order to receive salvation. Salvation does not depend upon a vast knowledge of prophecy. But it was important for the prophets to know! It was important, and is, for the watchmen to know!

Only if people can know what is coming will they take the necessary actions in their own lives, with their families and loved ones. Only when people are shocked into an awareness of how near we are to the most tumultuous time in world history will they begin to call out to God in heart-felt repentance, and seek His loving mercy.

What Events Might Cause War in the Mideast?

Perhaps a temple will be built prior to an outbreak of another major war in the Mideast. On the other hand, perhaps the outbreak of war will bring about the building of a temple, as mentioned before.

Now think about what has occurred in Saudi Arabia, where the most massive truck bomb in history killed nineteen Americans and injured hundreds more.

Though four different groups claimed responsibility for the blast, both Saudi and American officials believed it was the work of Islamic extremists, probably from the Shi'ite branch of Islam.

Suddenly, the Saudi government shocked the United States and Israel when Crown Prince Abdullah, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler (King Fahd is 75, and ailing), flew to Damascus for two days of meetings with the presidents of Syria and Egypt.

This surprising development occurred immediately following Benjamin Netanyahu's narrow victory in Israel.

It was seen as an attempt to resurrect the old axis of the largest Arab powers set up by Egypt's President Nasser in the late 1950s, called the "United Arab Republic," or the UAR.

Quoting Yaha Sadowski of the Brookings Institute, the Washington Times said, "The old Saudi-Egyptian-Syrian axis that launched the 1973 Yom Kippur War has been reconstructed, not to wage war but to expedite the Israel-Arab peace process."

The three Arab leaders, in a plain-language warning to Israel, said, "Any retraction by Israel on the basis of the peace process or going back on its commitments and pledges that have been reached...represents a real threat of returning the region to the cycle of tension and violence."

Abdullah is also exploring improved relations with Iraq as a counterbalance to the threat from Shi'ite Iran. About 10 percent of Saudi Arabia's population is Shi'ite Muslim, and they live in the oil-producing eastern regions of the country.

The speed with which the Arab summit in Cairo was set up was another surprise for both the United States and Israel. Saudi Arabia has previously kept a low profile in international diplomacy.

At the present time, it is not clear who will emerge to fulfil the Biblically-prophesied king of the south of Daniel 11. Neither is the king of the north clearly revealed as yet.

Still, with movement toward a new pan-Arab union of some kind, with the European Union issuing warnings to the Israeli government, and with the United States in the awkward position of maintaining a military presence in Saudi Arabia while at the same time heavily supporting Israel, it will not be very long before U.S. leadership in the region will be replaced by other powers.

How will the Great Tribulation begin?

It will begin exactly as Jesus Christ said it would, with droughts, famines, disease epidemics, wars, and rumors of wars. The preliminary part of the Great Tribulation may already have begun! "Tribulation" means "trouble." A time of great world trouble, such as was never before. Review all you have read. Think about what you see and hear in your own nightly news.

It yet remains for the detailed, specific things Jesus predicted to come to pass. At this moment, there is no temple in Jerusalem. Just now, we do not yet know who will emerge as the king of the south or the king of the north of Daniel 11:40-45. At the moment, though Europe is united in many ways, it certainly is not a military dictatorship. At the moment, there is no abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. At the moment, there are no armies surrounding Jerusalem (Luke 21:20). Yet, many, many other events which Jesus described seem to be taking place, mounting up, growing in proportion. The potential for major war in the Middle East is growing rapidly, as is the potential for war in Korea and elsewhere.

"Then Lift Up Your Heads..."

In spite of these terrifying conditions all around us, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ tells us "see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matthew 24:6).

As I have researched and written this booklet, I have come to know more than ever before the feelings of some of God's prophets of old who were astonished, and who rendered physically sick at what God revealed to them! the horrors of drought, famine, disease and war are extremely depressing—just as nearly all of our nightly news is depressing!

Somehow, God's people must resist this feeling of woe, hopelessness, and depression! We must be joyfully obedient to Christ's command, "see that ye be not troubled!"

Jesus also said, "And when these things [the events of the "Great Tribulation"] begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh!" (Luke 21:28).

When we are "down," we tend to look down. We walk with stooped shoulders, downcast. But Jesus Christ tells us no matter how horrible the events around us, we should look up; hold our heads up, square our shoulders,

have courage and faith to know that all will be well in the long run.

The old saying, "it is always darkest just before the dawn," should be applied. things are going to get much, much worse in our old sin-sick world before they get any better. All these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet!

Now, do you know which specific prophecy Jesus Christ said would be fulfilled just before the tribulation?

Notice what He said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

Notice that this verse immediately precedes His warning about the abomination of desolation, yet comes after His predictions of wars, droughts, famines, disease, and religious persecution!

Paraphrased, Jesus said, "And this joyous, happy announcement of My coming world-ruling government shall be proclaimed all over the world, and then the end of man's civilization will come."

Jesus Christ is coming to rule this world with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:26; 3:21; 20:4; 19:11-21). He will intervene just before mankind would completely exterminate himself in a mindless frenzy of chemical, biological and nuclear warfare!

"And except those days [the terrible days of tribulation] should be shortened [the time cut short, stopped!], there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).

How we should praise God for those great words of encouragement, for Christ's promise that His elect will be spared from these horrifying things to come!

There is not one person in the United States or the entire British Commonwealth of nations out of one thousand who truly knows and understands what is coming on our nations; on Israel, the Mideast, and the world!

The millions are in complete ignorance of the meaning of the times in which we live!

Recently, when Islamic terrorists blasted the lives out of nineteen Americans and injured hundreds in Saudi Arabia, a courageous sergeant, stationed like a "watchman" on the roof, looked down and saw the big tanker truck pull up, followed by a car. He saw the men hurry out of the truck and jump in the car, and saw the car speed away.

Frantically, he ran down into the building, began yelling at the top of his lungs, banging on doors, trying to alert and warn his fellow service personnel. "BOMB! BOMB!" he screamed out. Some few responded, but he only had time to cover about the top three floors before the huge blast shattered the night, blew him off his feet, and killed and injured hundreds!

What would you do if your neighbor's house were on fire, and you thought they were asleep in an upstairs bedroom with their children? Would not you care deeply? Would not you want to warn them of what was happening?

So it is with God's people who are deeply dedicated to the "work of the watchman," who believe God's work must be done before the end of our civilization as we know it.

What are their motives?

As God told Ezekiel, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye! turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O House of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Their motives are completely selfless! They are gripped by spiritual zeal, an urgency to do God's work! They know it is a saving work, a work that urges people to repent, to be baptized, to receive God's Holy Spirit, and become His begotten child—but also a work which urgently seeks to save their families, their precious children and grandchildren alive!

They know Christ said, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always [pray without ceasing, daily prayer], that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

Yes, how wonderful it would be to be able to escape all these things that are to happen—to have protection for ourselves and our loved ones!

God promises to His elect, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Eternal, which is my Refuge, even the Most High, thy Habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Psalm 91:7-10).

Christ said, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but there shall not an hair of your head perish" (Luke 21:17,18).

So what are we to do?

First, we need to know that we are repentant before God. We need to know He has begotten us as His own child. We need to know we are a part of His work. We need to know we are among those "whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing" (Matthew 24:46).

Clearly, God promises each and every one of us we will not be tested or tried "above that we are able to bear" (1 Corinthians. 10:13), but will make a way of escape for each of His people (Revelation 3:10).

There is not one thing you or I can "do" about the situation in the Middle East, or about drought, or famine, or plague, or war. We cannot influence government, and of course we do not attempt to do so.

But we can do the work of the watchman! We can be like the courageous sergeant who shouted out a warning to his fellows; who urgently, desperately tried to save as many of them as he could!

May the Eternal God inspire you to have a part in His work of witness and warning; His work of proclaiming the blessed, happy, joyous good news of the coming Kingdom of God to a suffering, pain-ridden, war-torn world.

Let us never forget to pray as we watch. Remember, the very first request Jesus Christ said we should make in our daily prayers is "Thy kingdom come"!

The nearer we are to the horrifying times of the Great Tribulation, the nearer we are to the second coming of

Jesus Christ! Therefore, let us, as we see these things coming upon a sin-sick, suffering world, "lift up our heads," because we know our redemption draws nigh.

-End-

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