2012: The Year The World Didn't End

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Prophecy Central
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Review of 2012 in Prophecy

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INTRODUCTION

For many years we have written a “Year in Prophecy” review in December, recounting interesting world developments as they relate to Bible prophecy. These reports have been getting longer each year, so we decided to issue it as a free downloadable book.

Most of this information is documented on Prophecy Central’s more than 100 sections of biblical information and current events. Quotations and factual information may be accessed through the footnotes. The numerous blue underlined words are hyperlinks to various Internet sources.

Most of these links take you to the relevant sections of Prophecy Central. If the original story is still on line you may link to it by clicking on the story’s headline. If it is not available, you will still see our summary of the article.

Most quotations in this book are from the New King James Version. Hyperlinks to Scripture take you to the appropriate section in the Blue Letter Bible for further study.

Those interested in further information are encouraged to get the “big picture” of Bible Prophecy by reading our book, “Connecting the Dots: A Handbook of Bible Prophecy.”

You will also find a wealth of knowledge at Lambert Dolphin’s Library. Lambert is the co-author of “Connecting the Dots.”

A word of warning is in order before you begin. Sometimes honesty hurts. These are surely evil days that could very well be ushering in the end times. There is much suffering and discouragement in our world, and the Signs of the Times we are about to consider will be dreadful. But remember this, for true believers in The Lord Jesus Christ there is an incredibly happy ending. Even if we do experience hardship in the days ahead, we have vital kingdom work to do, and it will be very rewarding. That is why we end this year’s review with a most positive note – the likelihood of a great end times Revival!
THE WORLD DIDN’T END!

According to a poll conducted by Ipsos Global Public Affairs, one-seventh of the world’s population believes that the world could end in their lifetime. The poll included 16,262 people from all over the world. Many responders thought that there was some validity to the 2012 Mayan calendar issue, while others think an apocalypse could come through the hands of God, a natural disaster, or a political event.¹

The date of December 21, 2012 came and went without the cataclysmic end of the world that was predicted by some people, based on the Mayan long-count calendar’s end date. Truthfully, most people didn’t expect it to happen so there was no great panic about it. We devote a small section of this book to that issue.

It was definitely a year that brought us closer to the nuclear brink. Iran’s mad pursuit of nuclear weapons and the inability of the rest of the world to dissuade them has been a major issue all year. The good news is – we are still here!

We must also say this was another year when Jesus did not return for His saints in the “Rapture” of the Church. Of course we did not set dates – He warned us not to. But we live constantly in this “blessed hope” of the Church.² Ever since the First Century Christians have believed that His coming is imminent – meaning that it could happen any day!

On the other hand, even if Jesus had returned this year, it would not mark the “End of the World.” The End of the World is NOT Near! Balanced biblical teaching does indicate that there is a glorious new age coming, during which Jesus Christ will reign. Fear and dread are not appropriate for those who know Christ. Nevertheless, there are many doomsday scenarios in the news, and some of them do have prophetic value. The balance here is to remember that the Bible predicts bad times ahead, but not the total destruction of life.

See: The End/New Beginning

At Prophecy Central we have more than 100 separate topical sections that relate to Bible Prophecy. Each section gives basic information about how that topic fits the “big picture” of prophecy, and most of them record noteworthy current events. The current events list the most recent article first, with a hyperlink to the original story if it is still on line, and then gives a summary of the article. In time, some of the articles disappear from the Internet but the summaries will still be available on our website.

In the past, when we did our year-in-review project, we usually listed the most newsworthy topics in order of their importance during the year. We are not doing it that way in this book, but we did post a blog with the “Top Ten Prophecy Stories of 2012”. Here is a list of those topics:

2012 in Review: The Year in Prophecy

1-Wars
2-Rumors of War
3-Presidential Elections
4-Persecution
5-Antichrist/False Prophecies
6-The Economy
7-Apostasy
8-Revival
9-Natural Disasters
10-Signs in the Heavens/Fearful Events

This book will give much greater detail and cover these topics in a different order.
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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

The reason we believe that Bible prophecies will be fulfilled is that the Bible is full of predictions that have already come to pass in the most literal way! More than a fourth of the Bible is prophecy. Those that relate to Israel’s past history and all the prophecies that foretold the life and death of Jesus Christ have also been fulfilled.

The Bible requires that its’ prophecies be 100% accurate. Those who presume to tell the future by divine inspiration cannot afford to make one mistake. If any of their prophecies fail to be fulfilled at the proper time during the prophet’s life he was to be put to death.

20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. ’21 And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ — 22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. – Deuteronomy 18:20-22

For that reason there have only been a small number of people whose circumstances were so convincing that they were actually considered prophets of God. There are many other sources of foretelling, but none of them are reliable like those of the Bible.

To illustrate the amazing accuracy of Bible prophecies, we will borrow this favorite illustration from the first chapter of our book, Connecting the Dots: A Handbook of Bible Prophecy.

Josh McDowell, in his classic book, Evidence That Demands a Verdict, lists sixty-one categories of fulfilled prophecies about the coming of Messiah. All of them were fulfilled by the life of Jesus Christ. He quotes figures from Peter Stoner’s earlier book, Science Speaks, to demonstrate the astronomical odds against just eight of these prophecies being fulfilled by coincidence.

Stoner wrote, "We find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17}." To illustrate that number, Stoner then suggested that the reader visualize that many silver dollars spread across the whole state of Texas. They would cover the state 2 feet deep. Then, if one silver dollar were marked and buried, the chances of a blindfolded man picking that one marked silver dollar with his first attempt would be the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies down and then having them all come true in one person.3

Now, since the prophecies of Jesus’ first advent were fulfilled perfectly, we can expect the ones that still await fulfillment will also come true.

So, what are these major prophecies of the future? There are many, from both the Old and New Testaments. Perhaps it would be best to consider Jesus’ own outline of the future – given as part of his famous Sermon on the Mt. of Olives in Matthew 24 and 25 (Parallel passage in Luke 21).

Jesus' Own Outline of the Future - The Olivet Discourse

Jesus had much to say about the future. But before He gave His own outline for the future, he made a striking prediction of something that would happen within just a few decades.
Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” – Matthew 24:1-2

Looking across the Kidron Valley, from where He was on the Mount of Olives, Jesus called attention to the magnificent Temple built by Herod the Great. It was considered one of the most magnificent buildings in the world at that time. He said that in spite of its amazing size and grandeur, it would be utterly destroyed. This prophecy was fulfilled less than 40 years later in 70 AD, when the Roman army captured Jerusalem and completely dismantled the Temple. In this way Jesus validated His vision of future things.

When the Disciples wanted to know more, Jesus gave them a simple outline of things to come. It doesn’t include everything that will happen, but it gave them (and us) a timeline we can use to sort out various future events that we study.

Four Periods of Time

1-Beginning of Birth Pains

And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. – Matthew 24:4-8

Jesus warned about false messiahs, and predicted an increase in wars and rumors of wars, as well as famines and earthquakes before the beginning of the Tribulation. The list of signs given in the parallel passage in Luke's Gospel includes plagues, fearful events, and signs in the heavens (Luke 21:9-11).

In the course of this book we will explore all of these early signs in the light of current events. Wars and rumors of wars are always at the forefront of the news. There is much to report about these prophecies. The next two chapters will give an overview of the unfortunate wars that affect us.

False religions abound. And false teaching in Christian circles is also a major problem in our generation. We will devote Chapter 10 to this matter toward the end of the book.

Natural disasters, famines, and plagues are always with us, but they seem to be greater in some years than in others. Over-all, these conditions do seem to be increasing. We will discuss this in Chapter 6.

We will also refer to other aspects of the future that have to do with the Church Age, which Jesus had not yet explained, and therefore did not include in this famous sermon on the Mount of Olives. They would have been confusing to his listeners at that time.

In the later writings of the Apostle Paul, after the mystery of the Church Age was revealed, the Holy Spirit revealed other facets of the final days to him. He saw that the end of the Church Age would be characterized by apostasy, the “falling away” of the Church from its devotion to the Lord and to its commitment to biblical principles. As a result of the Church’s failure to be the champion of morality, the culture will slip into greater decay (1 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 6-7; 2 Timothy 3:1-8). The Revelation given to the Apostle John agrees
that the Church at the end of the Church Age—the Laodicean Church—will be "lukewarm" and ineffective (Revelation 3:14-22). Apostasy will be considered in Chapter 11.

See: Apostasy

Another important event that Paul revealed is the “Rapture”—or “catching away” of true believers at the end of the Church Age. Again, Jesus did not mention it in His sermon about the future because the whole concept of the Church was a “mystery,” which had not yet been revealed. This period of time, just before the beginning of The Tribulation is the logical place for the Rapture to occur. It also corresponds to the end of the Church Age foretold in The Revelation (Chapters 2-3), and the point in the vision at which the Apostle John was told to “Come up here,” (Revelation 4:1) to describe the rest of the events of the future, starting with the Tribulation.

See: The Rapture

2-The Tribulation

9 “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. 10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. 11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. – Matthew 24:9-14

When Jesus spoke of “tribulation,” He was referring to a seven-year covenant that Daniel foretold. We know this is true, because in verse 15 He mentions the “abomination of desolation” that marks the breaking of that covenant by the evil ruler who is to come.

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;
But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering,
And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,
Even until the consummation, which is determined,
Is poured out on the desolate.” – Daniel 9:27

The first half of these seven years of turmoil will be characterized by a growing polarization between good and evil, with believers being severely persecuted.

The apostasy that we are already seeing during this present time will be an even greater problem during the Tribulation because, as Jesus said, “lawlessness will abound.” Once Christians have been removed in a great exodus at the Rapture, there will undoubtedly be a multitude of new believers. Many who have heard the Gospel, but had not hardened their hearts against it, will suddenly realize that what they had heard was true, and that some of their friends and family have been taken to be with Jesus, just as they had said. The evil leadership of the world at that time will give other explanations—perhaps, that UFOs have removed the narrow-minded troublemakers from the earth. Many of those who have heard the Gospel may realize the truth and give their lives to Christ.
However, new Christians during the Tribulation will be persecuted for their faith. They will be killed or driven underground where they will hide from the authorities. It will be a very difficult time for them.

After the Rapture, people who called themselves Christians, but who had never truly accepted Christ as savior, may still attend their cold, liberal churches where the Bible is not really taught. Their churches will begin to band together with others who have no spiritual life, and even with other religions. But these people will not have a true love for God, and because of the evil, lawless, trends in society, they will drift further away from the truth.

Increased lawlessness will be a by-product of the absence of godly Christians from places of influence in the world. In the Rapture, true Christian legislators, judges, teachers, and others who influence culture will be taken away, and the new believers of the Tribulation period will not be allowed to ascend to those positions. Therefore, whatever restraint Christian leaders have now will be gone and morals will become progressively more corrupt.

During this first half of the seven-year Tribulation, the Apostle John predicted the torments of “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” (Revelation 6:1-8): The false messiah, a great world war, terrible famine, and death by various means.

Jesus promised that the Gospel will be preached to all the earth during this time. This probably relates to John’s vision of angels preaching the Gospel all over the world and warning everyone not to receive the Mark of the Beast (Revelation 14:6-11).

3-The Great Tribulation

15 “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 21 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. – Matthew 24:15-28

23 “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand.

26 “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. – Matthew 24:15-28

Jesus gave a preview of the horrifying events at the middle of the seven years of the treaty. According to the Book of Revelation, the first half would have already been a time of distress since true believers would have been persecuted and driven underground or killed. But then, the Beast will have an image of himself set up in the "Holy Place" in the newly rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. This is the "Abomination of Desolation" predicted by Daniel, and it will lead to the institution of a world-wide economic dictatorship and the dreaded "Mark of the Beast" (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 13).

At that point many Jewish people will realize that the new world dictator is evil. Those who live near Jerusalem will need to flee immediately into the wilderness. The Old Testament
prophecy of Isaiah 63:1-6 indicates that God will defend them during this awful time in the area of Bozrah, near the ancient city known as Petra in modern Jordan.

As the dreaded seven years of tribulation and “great tribulation” come to a close, the Beast will realize that his world empire is crumbling. In frustration he will unite all nations in their mutual opposition to Jesus Christ, and will gather a great army from all over the world to participate in the Campaign of Armageddon.

Jesus’ will return in power and great glory, destroying His enemies and gathering the faithful together to enjoy His restored kingdom. His glorious return will be like the lightning in the sky. When He comes “every eye will see him,” and He will come as “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16).

4-After the Tribulation

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. – Matthew 24:29-31

After the Campaign of Armageddon, Jesus will gather true believers who remain and allow them to enter His Millennial Kingdom, where He will reign for 1000 years over a restored “Eden-like” earth (Revelation 20:1-6). Non-believers still alive after Armageddon will also be gathered and bound for future judgment (Like the weeds of the parable in Matthew 13:24-30).

“Signs of the Times”

Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” And He left them and departed. – Matthew16:1-3

The rest of the chapter titles of this book are “Signs of the Times.” These are trends, developments, and events foretold by the Bible. Some of them are more prevalent in one of the above four time periods than the other, but all of them are increasing in significance as we approach the end times. We will comment on them to the extent that there have been new developments recently.
CHAPTER 2

WARS

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come." - Matthew 24:6

Wars are the predominant news that relate to Bible prophecy. It has always been this way, but it is getting worse, and the connection with Bible lands and Bible prophecy is more striking than ever.

Future Wars – According to Bible Prophecy

There are a number of wars mentioned in Bible prophecy that help us establish a timeline of future events. We will look at some of them now. Certain wars may overlap with others in the list.

Destruction of certain ancient enemies of Israel:

First, we need to be aware of a few important prophecies against some of Israel’s ancient enemies that have not yet been completely fulfilled. In each case there has been a partial fulfillment, but they are probably examples of the “near” and “far” fulfillment of some biblical prophecies. Some examples of this principle are the coming of Messiah, the future of Israel, and Jesus’ Olivet Discourse. Prophecies of Messiah indicated that He would come to reign, but some of them foretold His suffering. We now know that the suffering was the “near” fulfillment, and His reign will come when He returns to earth. In Israel’s case, the nation has a glorious future, but other prophecies indicate a time of “Jacob’s trouble.” The trouble will be the Tribulation Period, but the “far” prophecies are about the Millennium and beyond. In the Olivet Discourse in the previous chapter, Jesus gave a “near” prophecy about the destruction of the Temple, and a sequence of “far” events that are still to come.

In these end times there may be separate disastrous events that will totally devastate three places listed below. It is also possible that they will be part of the larger destruction of the other wars that will still take place according to the Bible, but we consider them separately here because they do not appear to be prominent players in those future wars.

Destruction of Damascus

\[1\] A prophecy against Damascus:
“See, Damascus will no longer be a city
but will become a heap of ruins.
\[2\] The cities of Aroer will be deserted
and left to flocks, which will lie down,
with no one to make them afraid.
\[3\] The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim,
and royal power from Damascus; - Isaiah 17:1-3.
Damascus, the capital of Syria, is one of the oldest continually-inhabited cities in the world. It is mentioned often in the Bible. The people who initially populated the area were the descendants of Aram, the son of Shem, the son of Noah (Genesis 10:21-23). Various tribes gradually came under the control of Damascus. During the rise of Islam, the city was chosen as the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate from 661 to 750. Today is a major city of the Middle East with a population of approximately 2 million.

A great civil war Syria has been raging in Syria for almost two years. It was a delayed result of the Arab Spring that brought protests and revolutions to various countries. It has already resulted in more than 60,000 deaths, turned approximately 1.5 million citizens into refugees, and caused untold destruction in the embroiled country. Recent developments have centered on the capital city of Damascus, causing intense destruction of government strongholds. President Bashar Assad’s ability to hold out against the rebels is rapidly declining. Intelligence sources say that his forces have prepared Sarin gas from his stockpile of chemical weapons of mass destruction.

The United States and other nations have warned Syria that if the government does use these weapons against their own people they will be crossing a “red line” for military intervention from the outside.

It is certainly conceivable that the conclusion of this terrible conflict could leave Damascus a “heap of ruins” that will then be deserted.

Read more about Syria below – under Syrian Civil War
See: Syria

Destruction of Babylon

19 Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms,
the pride and glory of the Babylonians,
will be overthrown by God
like Sodom and Gomorrah.
20 She will never be inhabited
or lived in through all generations;
there no nomads will pitch their tents,
there no shepherds will rest their flocks.
21 But desert creatures will lie there,
jackals will fill her houses;
there the owls will dwell,
and there the wild goats will leap about.
22 Hyenas will inhabit her strongholds,
jackals her luxurious palaces.
Her time is at hand,
and her days will not be prolonged. – Isaiah 13:19-22

The general area of ancient Babylon is modern Iraq. After the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington D.C., the U.S. invaded Afghanistan to deal with Al Qaida and the Taliban, but Iraq also became a focus of attention as a sponsor of terrorism. Saddam Hussein was a despicable tyrant who slaughtered his own people, even using chemical weapons of mass
destruction against them, and was believed to be developing nuclear weapons. He ignored and defied multiple resolutions by the United Nations to allow inspectors to determine the extent of their nuclear activities. In March of 2003 the United States and Great Britain invaded Iraq to overthrow Hussein and stop any development of weapons of mass destruction. The weapons were never found, though there was evidence that they were shipped to Syria just before the invasion. Saddam Hussein was eventually found, tried, and executed in 2006.

The U.S. finally withdrew troops from Iraq in 2011. Immediately after that there was an upsurge of terrorist activities, foreshadowing an undesirable future for the nation.

The ancient ruins of Babylon, which were undergoing a massive renovation by Saddam Hussein, were not greatly affected by the war. "Mystery Babylon" makes a major appearance in the Book of Revelation. The woman riding the Beast in Revelation 17 is symbolic of a one-world religion that gives its power to the Antichrist regime of the end times. This "united religion" will be made possible by the absence of the Church after the rapture has taken place, and an uneasy truce between religions including Islam.

Many Old Testament prophecies foretold the destruction of Babylon. Isaiah and Jeremiah said that it would be desolate and never inhabited again (Isaiah 13:19-20; Jeremiah 50:39-40). The Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire, and in time the city did become virtually uninhabited, but many Bible scholars think that the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy is still future and it may apply to "Mystery Babylon."

See: Mystery Babylon, Iraq (America War), Apostasy, Religions

**Egypt’s Future**

8 ‘Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “Surely I will bring a sword upon you and cut off from you man and beast. 9 And the land of Egypt shall become desolate and waste; then they will know that I am the LORD, because he said, ‘The River is mine, and I have made it.’ 10 Indeed, therefore, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Ethiopia. 11 Neither foot of man shall pass through it nor foot of beast pass through it, and it shall be uninhabited forty years. 12 I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate; and among the cities that are laid waste, her cities shall be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries.”’ – Ezekiel 29:8-12

The Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia in 2011, quickly spread to Egypt, where its citizens deposed President Mubarak, awakening hopes of a democratic future for the nation. Since then the Muslim Brotherhood, a radical branch of Sunni Islam that had spawned Hamas and had been banned in Egypt, emerged as the people’s favorites, and many of their representatives were elected to their parliament. Their new president, Mohammed Morsi is also a member of the Brotherhood.

At the present there is a constitutional crisis in Egypt because President Morsi assumed dictatorial control, replacing some military leaders and tying the hands of the judicial branch of government, presumably just long enough for the country to adopt its new constitution. It is thought that most, Egyptians do not want a strict Sharia Law constitution for their country. They are protesting the president’s actions, but apparently to no avail.
There are actually several threads of prophetic information in the Bible about the future of Egypt.

First, Egypt is conspicuously absent from the War of Gog and Magog portrayed in Chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel. This section describes a major future attack against Israel after the Chosen People have been re-gathered from all over the world (Ezekiel 36 and 37) and restored to their homeland. This prophecy was fulfilled by the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948. The attack will be led by Magog, the descendants of Noah’s grandson (Genesis 10:1-2) who migrated to the north, where Russia and Turkey are today. Magog’s allies will include other northern nations that descended from Magog’s brothers, as well as Persia (Elam – Genesis 10:22), plus Libya and Ethiopia (Put and Cush - Genesis 10:6). In short, it appears that this still-future war will be led by Russia and her Islamic neighbors and allies. However, Egypt (Mizraim-Genesis 10:6) is not named. This leads us to believe that Egypt will not be closely aligned with the Magog coalition when this war occurs.

For the past three decades Israel’s progress and security has been due in part to the peace agreement they have had with Egypt. Major changes in Egypt cast doubt on the future of that peace, but the fact that the prophecy of the war of Magog does not specifically include Egypt may mean that the changes there will not be as radical as the changes that resulted from Iran’s Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Two other Bible prophecies about Egypt should be mentioned.

In Daniel’s amazing 11th chapter, Egypt is identified as the King of the South in conflict with another power, the King of the North. In the first part of the chapter (Daniel 11:5-20) the King of the North describes the Roman Empire. Rome’s struggle with Egypt is depicted there, with Israel, “the Beautiful Land,” caught in the middle. Rome would gradually decline, and be destroyed, not by battle, but by internal decay.

However, according to the second half of the chapter (Daniel 11:21-45), there will be a renewed or revived empire in the end times, led by a contemptible person, who undoubtedly corresponds to “The Beast” of Revelation 13. Toward the end of the Tribulation Period he will conquer the King of the South, including “many countries.” In verse 42 the Bible predicts, “Egypt will not escape.” In the light of current events this end-time King of the South will most likely be a coalition of Islamic nations.

In Ezekiel chapters 29 and 30, Egypt’s downfall was predicted, and these prophecies were basically fulfilled by Babylon’s conquest of the land. However, there is one aspect of these chapters that apparently looks beyond the Babylonian period to the end times, as the prophecies sometimes did. It tells of a terrible destruction of their great river, which of course, is the Nile, and a period of 40 years after the event that the land would be unusable and the people would be scattered. Gary Stearman of Prophecy in the News wrote an article suggesting that this could refer to a future nuclear attack on their Aswan High Dam. The Dam, built in 1967 with the help of Russia, is so massive that it has been said it could not be destroyed by any weapon except a nuclear device. If it were destroyed, the resulting flood would wipe out almost all of the population in the path of the river. And, if a nuclear device caused the destruction, the land would be contaminated by radioactivity and made unusable for decades. In the fast-changing warscape of the Middle East, such a scenario could be imagined either as a result of Egypt turning against Israel, causing them to use nuclear force, or as a challenge to the competing Islamic power and belief system of Shite Iran, which will have nuclear weapons very soon and may try to rebuild the old Islamic caliphate.
Another significant prophecy about Egypt is found in Isaiah 19. This chapter is a prediction of future punishment of Egypt that seems to go beyond what has already happened to them. It could be a picture of what will happen to them during the Tribulation Period. But it concludes with a time of belief and salvation for the nation, probably during the millennial reign of Christ.

See: Rumors of War, Egypt

A regional war in the Middle East
(Psalm 83)

1 Do not keep silent, O God!
   Do not hold Your peace,
   And do not be still, O God!
2 For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;
   And those who hate You have lifted up their head.
3 They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,
   And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.
4 They have said, “Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation,
   That the name of Israel may be remembered no more.”

5 For they have consulted together with one consent;
   They form a confederacy against You:
6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;
   Moab and the Hagrites;
7 Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek;
   Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
8 Assyria also has joined with them;
   They have helped the children of Lot. Selah

9 Deal with them as with Midian,
   As with Sisera,
   As with Jabin at the Brook Kishon,
10 Who perished at En Dor,
   Who became as refuse on the earth.
11 Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb,
   Yes, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
12 Who said, “Let us take for ourselves
   The pastures of God for a possession.”

13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
   Like the chaff before the wind!
14 As the fire burns the woods,
   And as the flame sets the mountains on fire,
15 So pursue them with Your tempest,
   And frighten them with Your storm.
Fill their faces with shame,  
That they may seek Your name, O LORD.  
Let them be confounded and dismayed forever;  
Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,  
That they may know that You, whose name alone is the LORD,  
Are the Most High over all the earth.

Bible scholars have generally agreed that this list of people, whom the Psalm says hated the God of Israel, included many distant relatives of Israel who did all in their power to keep the Chosen people from surviving the Exodus and inhabiting the Promised Land. But there is no historical event that fulfills this striking prophecy.

There has never been a time as likely as the days in which we are living for these enemies to join forces in an effort to drive Israel out of their land. Let us identify the ancient tribes that are named and consider who they are today.

**Edom and Amalek** – Edom is another name for Esau, the son of Isaac and older brother of Jacob (Genesis 36). The name was probably derived from Esau’s unspiritual decision to sell his birthright to Jacob in exchange for a little of Jacob’s “red stew” (Genesis 25:21-34). It could also be partly derived from the fact that he was born noticeably red (Genesis 25:24-25) or because of the red soil of the area he inhabited – south of the Dead Sea. This area is part of modern Jordan. Edomites were also called Idumeans. Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:10-12).

**Ishmaelites** – These were the descendants of Ishmael, the brother of Isaac. God had promised Abraham a son whose descendants would be countless. In their old age, Abraham and Sarah did not think they could have a child together, so Sarah gave him Hagar, her handmaid to bear Ishmael. After God fulfilled his promise by letting Sara give birth to Isaac, there was great strife between the two women, and Abraham finally had to send Hagar and Ishmael away. The Lord told Abraham that He would care for them and also make a great nation of Ishmael’s family (Genesis 17:19-20; Genesis 21). It is generally thought that most of the Arabs near Israel are the descendants of Ishmael.

**Hagrites** – This is another name for Ishmaelites. It is derived from Hagar, their mother.

**Moab and Ammon** (the children of Lot) – After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham’s nephew Lot had two daughters but no sons. The daughters manipulated circumstances so that he unknowingly impregnated them while he was intoxicated (Genesis 19:30-38). The sons born in this way were Moab and Ammon (Ben-Ammi). The descendants of Moab populated the central portion of what is Jordan today, and the descendants of Ben-Ammi populated the northern portion, where the modern capital city is still called Amman. Jordan has had a peace treaty with Israel since 1994. It is hoped that this agreement will withstand the current Islamic unrest in the area but it is known that the Muslim Brotherhood has a very strong presence in Jordan, and they have made it clear that they would drive the Jews out of the land if they could.

**Gebal and Tyre** - Gebal was an ancient city in Phoenicia, the coastlands north of Israel (Ezekiel 27:8-9). It was also called Byblos. The area was often referred to as “Tyre and Sidon” in the Bible. The region is now modern Lebanon. Until the 1970’s Lebanon was a peaceful and prosperous country with a considerable number of Christians, but since the rise of the terrorist organization there known as Hezbollah, they have been pawns of Syria and Lebanon, and are opposed to Israel.
Philistia – The Philistines were “Sea People” who settled on the southern Coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the Promised Land. The name meant “invaders” or immigrants” to the Hebrews. They were descendants of the Egyptian settlers after the Flood of Noah’s time (Genesis 10:13). They established five cities there: Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza. They were the main enemies of Israel until the time of the Assyrians. Their territory is now called the Gaza Strip. The name “Palestine” was ascribed to the entire area of the Holy Land after the Romans put down the second Jewish revolt led by Simon Bar Kokhba in AD 135. It was meant as an insult to the Jewish people who were driven from their land. Hamas, the terrorist organization that was spawned by the Muslim Brotherhood, controls the Gaza strip today, and is responsible for the suicide bombings a decade ago and the numerous rocket attacks that have plagued Israel recently.

Assyria – The descendants of Shem’s son Asshur (Genesis 10:22) settled in the Fertile Crescent north of Israel. It became a nation-state, and later developed into the Assyrian Empire. It eventually conquered the northern 10 tribes of Israel in BC 722. All of these developments came and went without fulfilling this 83rd Psalm. The Assyrian homeland covered parts of several modern countries: northern Iraq, northwestern Iran, southeastern Turkey and eastern Syria. It is not clear whether or not modern Syria will be involved in this war. The Syrian people descended from Aram, a different son of Shem. However, the proximity of Syria to Israel and the historical connection with Assyria make it possible that Syria would be aligned with these other enemies of Israel.

So, when will this war of Psalm 83 occur? One possible scenario that would include all these factors would be an escalation of the current tensions between Israel and the Palestinians so that a regional war erupts. Russia, Turkey and Iran might not be involved directly because the time is not yet right for the War of Gog and Magog, but an alliance of Islamic nations surrounding Israel, seeking to form a new caliphate could lead to this confrontation. The prevalent force in the region at this time is the Muslim Brotherhood, which has effectively taken control of Egypt and has a strong influence on Hamas in the Gaza strip, and also in Jordan on the other side of Israel. Shia nations like Iran would be reluctant to join the Sunni-influenced Muslim Brotherhood, but many of the rebels in Syria’s civil war are Sunnis, and Lebanon, with a mixed Islamic population, would probably follow Syria’s lead.

Another way this war could be started would depend on Syria. What might happen if either side in the Syrian civil war struggle were to use their chemical weapons of mass destruction against Israel? Israel would most likely respond with overwhelming force to utterly destroy Damascus.

Such a victory for Israel could produce the temporary peace that will need to be in place later when the War of Gog and Magog will begin (Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39). We will consider this future war next.

The war of Gog and Magog

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 “Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3 and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. 4 I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.” – Ezekiel 38:1-4
An alliance of enemies will attack Israel in the end times. The leader will be Gog of the land of Magog. God will bring a quick end to this future war.

The emerging world dictator could take credit for the destruction of Israel's invaders, or at least take advantage of the situation, to bring about the seven-year peace treaty between himself and Israel that was prophesied by Daniel. If this is the case, this war would take place at the very beginning of the seven years of the Tribulation.

- The Aggressors of the War of Gog and Magog - Ezekiel 38:1-7

According to Ezekiel, an alliance of enemies will attack Israel in the end times. The leader will be Gog of the land of Magog, who is the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. He is assisted by Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, Beth Togarmah, and other nations. Most of these names are listed in the genealogies of Genesis 10. Gog is not listed in Genesis 10, but he is evidently the head of the land of Magog, who is mentioned as a son of Japheth, one of Noah’s sons. It is known that Japheth traveled north from Mt. Ararat after the flood.

Many commentators from the turn of this century and before have identified Gog and Magog with Russia even though, at the time, they could not explain why Russia would turn against God's people. They conjectured that perhaps the time would come when there would be animosity between Russia and Israel.

Persia is now known as Iran, and there is an amazingly close relationship now between Russia and Iran. Cush is Ethiopia and Sudan, Put is Libya, Gomer and Beth Togarmah may well be Turkey and/or other Islamic nations like those once part of the Soviet Union.

It is interesting that Mizraim, the forefather of Egypt is apparently missing from this lineup. This, of course, fits the current world scene, with Egypt being the first Arab nation to make peace with Israel. Recent developments in Egypt may have a negative effect on that treaty.

- The Target: Israel - Ezekiel 38:8-12

This is the only time in history that this could be said of Israel, that they were brought back from many nations. It is true that they were brought back from Babylon and Persia in the Old Testament, but it is only since the Zionist movement, which began in the late 1800's, that Jewish people have returned from nations all over the world. They had been scattered abroad even in New Testament times. On the Day of Pentecost, for example, the various languages spoken by the Apostles, when the Holy Spirit came upon them, represented the many lands where they had settled. But they had not returned to stay. This really never happened until the amazing events that led to the rebirth of Israel in 1948. What thoughts would come into Russia's mind to make them want to attack Israel? Israel has always been a key land bridge between Russia's allies and is presently an enemy of some of those allies. Any number of scenarios in the always-volatile Middle East politics could lead to a Russian attack in the future. One new consideration is the fact that Israel now has control of an immense off-shore natural gas field known as “Leviathan.” Control of natural gas resources is a matter of great importance to Russia.

- Israel's Allies - Ezekiel 38:13

Israel's allies appear to be few and feeble. Some of Saudi Arabia was populated by Sheba and Dedan. The merchants of Tarshish could be England and English colonies. In that case, The
United States could even be included since we were once an English colony. These allies ask why Russia and its allies are coming, but do not appear to deter them.

- **The Outcome** - [Ezekiel 38:14-23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2038%3A14-23&version=ESV)

  The outcome of this future war will be a judgment from God. It could be God’s personal power, raining literal fire and brimstone, as in the days of Sodom, or it could be God using nation against nation, as he often did in the Old Testament, to precipitate a nuclear exchange.

  > And with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone. - Ezekiel 38:22

  The next chapter of Ezekiel continues to give details of this great conflict. Again, it is a scene of utter destruction.

  > “Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken,” says the Lord God. “And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.” - Ezekiel 39:3-6

This war is probably the same as the war of the Second Seal in [Revelation 6:3-4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%206%3A3-4&version=ESV), a major conflict near the beginning of the Tribulation Period.

  Some scholars suggest that the last part of chapter 39 ([Ezekiel 39:17-29](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel%2039%3A17-29&version=ESV)) may look beyond the War of Gog and Magog to the Battle of Armageddon.

**The war of the Second Seal**

  > When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. – Revelation 6:3-4

The opening of the First Seal, in the previous two verses ([Revelation 6:1-2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%206%3A1-2&version=ESV)), reveals a rider on a white horse with a bow and a crown. He went out “conquering and to conquer.” This is a picture of a mighty ruler (crown) with great military power (bow). In the context of this chapter, which describes the beginning of the Tribulation Period, he could not be Jesus the Messiah, who also comes on a white horse at the end of the Tribulation ([Revelation 19:11 ff](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2019%3A11%20ff&version=ESV)). But white undoubtedly symbolizes that people will consider him good – a deliverer of the world in turmoil. He will be the Beast of Revelation 13, often referred to as “Antichrist.”

  Then the Second seal is opened. He will “take peace from the earth,” and people will kill one another. This will be a world war, but not as great as the Campaign of Armageddon, which is described in several places in the Revelation, and comes at the end of the Tribulation.

  This war could be the same as the War of Gog and. This is especially logical when one considers that Ezekiel 36 and 37 predict the rebirth of the nation of Israel, which has happened in our own generation, and the next two chapters, Ezekiel 38 and 39, foretell the War of Gog and
Magog. Notice, however, that the war of Psalm 83 could happen even before this one since it appears to be a regional war instead of a world war.

**The Beast's campaign to rule the world**

5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. 6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. 7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

- Revelation 13:5-8

This passage describes the three and a half year reign of the Beast. The picture is one of total control, but a related prophecy in Daniel 11:20-45 shows that there will be rebellious groups that he will need to discipline during this time.

**The Campaign of Armageddon**

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND
LORD OF LORDS.

- Revelation 19:11-16

This is the final military campaign of the Tribulation period. It apparently involves representatives of all nations (Revelation 16:12-14), summoned by the Beast in a last effort to bring Jesus Christ down out of heaven to protect His chosen people. Evidently the Beast will think he can defeat Christ, but there will be no comparison between his ability and resources when he faces God the Son in this decisive battle. As a result of this encounter, the Beast and the False Prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire, and all the other opponents of the Lord Jesus will be slain by the sword from His mouth – by His all-powerful words (Revelation 19:17-21).

By looking at the Harmony of Revelation Chart at the end of this book you can see that there are six different references to this terrible battle in the book. Because of this we are able to coordinate the chronology of the book by lining up these end points. We can then see that the Revelation is given as overlapping layers of prophecy, and it all makes much better sense.

**Satan's Last Stand**

7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They
went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.  

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

— Revelation 20:7-10

After the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, during which the current earth will have been restored to its original perfection, like the Garden of Eden, and the Lord Jesus Himself will have reigned in love and righteousness, mortal humans will still have the chance to choose to believe in Christ as Savior or rebel against Him. It is hard to imagine that anyone would rebel against Him, but some will. Satan will be released for a little while to gather those who still do not follow Jesus. They will surround Jerusalem and attempt to dethrone Christ. Fire from heaven will consume these rebels and Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Please notice that “Gog and Magog” are used as a description of these rebels, but there are many differences between this battle and the one of Ezekiel 38 and 39. It is likely after the Ezekiel war that God’s enemies will be called generically, “Gog and Magog.”
Wars in 2012

Unfortunately, wars and rumors of wars dominate the news and have a definite connection with the end times predicted in the Bible (Matthew 24:6). GlobalSecurity.com lists 20 current wars and another 20 military conflicts in the world at this time. The average person knows nothing about most of these struggles. Some have been going on for more than half of a century. On the other hand, some of these wars are constantly on the front pages of the news.

Middle East Tensions

Most of the fighting that the news media brought to our attention this year was in the Middle East and the rest of the Islamic world. As always, there is trouble between Israel and her neighbors. The Palestinian issue is getting worse, there is a devastating civil war in Syria, the new democracy in Iraq is in big trouble, Egypt is slipping toward a new dictatorship under the extreme policies of the Muslim Brotherhood, Iran is very close to owning nuclear weapons, the American ambassador to Libya and others were killed in a terrorist attack, and the Western World is wringing its hands and wondering what to do.

The Arab Spring

The popular revolt known as “The Arab Spring” began almost two years ago in Tunisia and quickly spread to Egypt. Citizens staged huge protests over a long enough period of time to successfully depose their dictator, Hosni Mubarak.

Most Arab countries had their own version of the protest, with varying success.

There were high hopes, not only in these various countries, but around the world, that the unseating of corrupt leaders would result in new levels of democracy and prosperity for the region. As time has gone on, it seems that there is less freedom and more control by extreme Islamist groups like Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood. The trend has been toward the strengthening of Islamic fundamentalism – meaning a return to Sharia law, intolerance of other religions, denial of women’s rights, and animosity toward Israel.

See: Terrorism

Iraq

In October of 2011 President Obama announced that all remaining U.S. troops would be pulled out of Iraq before the end of the year. Conservatives were distressed by the fact that such an abrupt and complete pull-out would lead to political instability in the country.

Unfortunately the decision was forced by Iraq's Shia Muslim leader Muqtada al-Sadr's warning that the U.S. soldiers must leave or face “resistance.”

By December 20, 2011 the US withdrawal was completed, ending nearly nine years of war.

Infighting between Shia and Sunni contingents in the country escalated immediately. A wave of bombings in Baghdad killed at least 69 people and injured 200 others.

Christians in Iraq were severely persecuted and virtually driven out of the country.

In October of this year, one year after the pull-out, news headlines announced that Baghdad was moving its allegiance from Washington to Moscow. Iraqi prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, made a $4.2 billion dollar arms deal with Russia that included 30 Mi-28 attack helicopters and 42 Pantsir-S1 surface-to-air missile systems. Iraq may also acquire MiG-29 fighter jets and
armored vehicles from Russia. Al Maliki, a Shia Muslim, is also backed by Iran. He claims that the deal will not have an adverse effect on relations with the West, but analysts see this as a lack of loyalty to the U.S.

In retrospect, many Americans think the rapid withdrawal of troops from Iraq was unwise, and doubt that the effort was worth the lives of more than 4,400 U.S. troops and the nearly $1 trillion price tag for the fighting and rebuilding of the nation.

Another discouraging event took place near the end of the year. Iraq’s president, Jabal Talabani, suffered a serious stroke and is in a coma. Joel Rosenberg described him as “a Kurdish guerilla, [who] has emerged as one of the more impressive peaceful and pro-democracy Reformers in Iraq.” If he is not able to return to service the cause of democracy there will suffer.

See: War in America

Afghanistan

Nearly two years ago President Obama announced that the U.S. would be withdrawing our combat troops by the end of 2014. Critics complained that this policy would cause the Taliban and other extremists in the country to just wait out the occupation and prepare to return things to their ways once the Americans have left. Tensions between U.S. soldiers and their Afghani counterparts have become intense, with numerous "insider attacks," by those who should be our allies.

In February Qurans that had been used to pass messages between war criminals in Afghanistan were inadvertently burned on a military base. This led to wide-spread rioting against the U.S. on the streets of Afghanistan. President Obama quickly issued an apology for the event, but GOP presidential candidate Newt Gingrich said that Afghan President Hamid Karzi should be the one apologizing to the U.S., and that the Afghans "do not deserve the apology of the United States." Six U.S. troops were killed by the Taliban in retaliation for burning the Qurans.

In March an unbalanced American soldier killed 16 Afghan civilians. This enraged Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who said he was at the "the end of the rope" because the U.S. is not cooperating with Afghanistan on their probe of the event. He demanded that the U.S. withdraw troops from the villages and accelerate their timetable for leaving Afghanistan.

In May Sakhr al-Taifi, Al Qaeda’s second-highest leader in Afghanistan, was killed in an airstrike conducted by the U.S.-led NATO force.

By September, when the "surge" troops, which had been sent in by President Obama, were completing their two-year term and returning to the U.S., an increasing number of U.S. casualties were being caused by Afghan soldiers and police. The total of U.S casualties in Afghanistan passed the 2000 mark that month.

Critics question the wisdom of turning the country over to a corrupt and ungrateful government there.

Incidentally, according to World Watch List, Afghanistan is currently the third worst country in the world for Christian persecution, just under North Korea and Saudi Arabia! Iraq is the fourth worst on the list.

See: War in America
**Libya**

In October of 2011 Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi was killed by rebel forces in his country. The rebels had received substantial aid from the U.S. and other countries, which had controlled the airways in Libya, weakening government forces there. After Gaddafi’s death Islamist radicals took control of the government. Over the course of time it became risky for western governments to maintain their embassies in the country. Even the Red Cross decided to leave the city of Benghazi because of a lack of security.

On Sept 11, 2012 – the anniversary of our 9/11 attacks – Christopher Stevens, the U.S. Ambassador to Libya, was attacked and killed, along with three other U.S. citizens. In the aftermath of the carnage, the American people were told outright by our U.N. Ambassador, Susan Rice, that the attacks were the result of a spontaneous protest by Muslims who were outraged by a You Tube video that portrayed Muhammad in an unfavorable way. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and President Obama gave the same impression in their messages to the nation by mentioning the video uproar in Egypt and downplaying the obvious fact that the attack was a well-planned terrorist plot by heavily-armed rebels associated with Al Qaeda.

An official report on the matter revealed that there were serious systemic failures in the State Department but it did not recommend any disciplinary action. Congress is still trying to determine what should be done about the situation.

See: Terrorism, Gog and Magog

**Syrian Civil War**

Five years ago Israel conducted a pre-emptive strike against a nuclear facility that Syria was building with Russia’s help. Since then there has been continued animosity between Israel and Syria, and tension between Russia and the United States about the situation.

The Arab Spring, which began two years ago, may have been partly responsible for an uprising in Syria against its government. Since then an intense and bloody civil war has caused untold damage, and, as mentioned above, has resulted in some 60,000 deaths.

Little by little the rebels have taken control of much of the country and are now striking targets in Aleppo and the capital city of Damascus. Even the Russians are beginning to admit that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad will lose the war.

What will happen to Syria when the war is over? Will they become another radical Islamist nation like what is happening to Libya and Egypt? An Al Qaeda group in Syria, known as the al-Nusra Front, was recently designated a terrorist organization by the United States. It wants to revive an Islamic Caliphate and impose Taliban-style rule. President Obama recognized another group, The Syrian Opposition Council, as the sole "legitimate representative" of its country's people. He urged the organization, "To make sure that they organize themselves effectively, that they are representative of all the parties, that they commit themselves to a political transition that respects women's rights and minority rights."

The greatest concern about Syria at the end of 2012 is the fact that the government has activated its stores of Sarin, a chemical weapon of mass destruction. It is not known whether or not the chemicals will actually be used in the struggle, but many fear that it could be a last desperate attempt by Assad to survive the civil war.

Credible sources report that Israeli Special Forces are on the ground in Syria, trying to monitor its chemical weapons stockpile. Israel and Jordan have had discussions about intervention before the chemicals are used. In addition, Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs
Moshe Ya’alon said that American forces were also gearing up for possible intervention in Syria if chemical weapons are deployed.

The Syrian crisis also affects its neighbors. In Lebanon the terrorist Hezbollah organization stands ready to act in Iran’s behalf to help President Assad survive. Turkey has received Patriot missile defense batteries and 400 U.S. troops to operate them in case Syria attacks Turkey.

Just a few hours after the Patriots were delivered; three Russian warships arrived at Syria’s Tartus port with 24 “fearsome” Iskander 9K720 cruise missile systems. They were immediately set up opposite Turkey, Jordan and Israel. All of them pointed at US military targets. It is said that the West and Israel have no defense against the Iskander’s hypersonic speed of more than 1.3 miles per second, and the ability to deliver a 1,500-pound warhead with pinpoint accuracy. It is also nuclear-capable.

This development is the escalation that Iran’s chief of staff Gen. Hassan Firouzabadi warned about on Dec. 15th when he said that placing Patriot missiles in Turkey would cause a world war.7 It is a breach of Russian President Vladimir Putin's promise, to both George W. Bush and Barack Obama, not to allow the Iskander reach the hands of Syria or Iran.

For a year Iran has re-supplied Syria's military by commercial and unmarked airplanes. It is now known that they return to Iran loaded with Russian S-300 missile defense systems. This will be a serious deterrent to Israel’s plans if they decide to execute a preemptive strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities.

Everything considered, the Syrian Civil War is a crisis for the whole world. It could result in the destruction of Damascus mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (Isaiah 17:1-3).

See: Syria, Gog and Magog, Terrorism

Israel-Palestinian War (& Peace Process)

*They dress the wound of my people*

*as though it were not serious.*

*‘Peace, peace,’* they say,

*when there is no peace.* – Jeremiah 6:14

Ever since Israel became a nation in 1948 there have been conflicts with the Palestinians who share the land. Terrorist activities, from suicide attacks in the past to rocket attacks in the present have caused great concern among Israelis, and periodic retaliation by the Israeli military.

Hope for peace between Israel and the Palestinians suffered a major setback this year. The discordant tone was set the previous year (2011) by the general unrest of the “Arab Spring” and the decision by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to seek direct recognition for Palestine as a separate state from the United Nations.

The Arab Spring protests began in Tunisia, spread to Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Algeria, and to a lesser extent affected Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman and Syria. The good side of the protests was the desire for freedom from the dictatorships of these various nations. It was hoped that the countries involved would gain democratic governments from the process. The actual result, especially in Libya and Egypt, was a questionable democracy and strong leadership from radical Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood and Al Qaida.

The Palestinians’ decided to make progress in the atmosphere of the Arab Spring by ignoring peace talks with Israel and trying to garner support from the United Nations to establish
their statehood unilaterally. In September of 2011 the U.N. did allow discussion of the Palestinian bid for recognition, but there was not quite enough support for the idea.

At the outset of 2012 low-level talks were begun between Israel and the Palestinians in Jordan, but Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said he would not resume negotiations unless Israel freezes settlement construction and accepts the pre-1967 Mideast War frontier as the baseline for a future border. The talks were deadlocked, with only occasional efforts from one side or the other to consider resuming them. Israel complained that the Palestinians would not talk about Israel’s security needs. The Palestinians objected strenuously to Israel’s ongoing building of settlements in East Jerusalem and other West Bank areas.

In February Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas chief Khaled Meshal issued a joint statement (the Doha declaration) that Abbas would head a Fatah-Hamas unity government. Such a move would be a major step forward for reconciliation between the rival factions. Abbas’ Fatah party is the ruling force in the West Bank, and it has said in principle that Israel has a right to exist. Hamas is the ruling party in the Palestinian’s Gaza Strip. They have been branded “terrorists” by the West, and are quite vocal about their objection to Israel’s very existence. They were a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood from decades ago, when the Brotherhood was banned in Egypt because of their radical Islamic beliefs and activities.

Meshal said, "We are serious, both Fatah and Hamas, in healing the wounds and ending the chapter of division and reinforcing and accomplishing reconciliation,"... and move forward "to resist the enemy [Israel] and achieve our national goal."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah, if approved, would end the hope of an Israeli-Palestinian peace plan. As it turned out, the agreement was never implemented. Almost immediately after the meeting Hamas leaders in Gaza publicly opposed the deal and have failed to support it.

In March The Quartet of Middle East negotiators – the United States, Russia, the United Nations and European Union – made a feeble effort to restart the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, but to no avail. At that time many rockets had been launched from Gaza into Israel, and the Quartet did express concern about the escalation and called for calm.

From April to November peace talks were on hold, and Israel’s attention was focused mainly on the rapid progress of Iran’s nuclear program and other tensions in the region. Meanwhile, Hamas sent a steady stream of rockets into Israel, month after month!

Hamas terrorists in the Gaza strip launched more than 2000 rockets into Israel this year. In November (while I was there, leading a tour!) Israel struck back with air attacks for eight punishing days. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton helped the new president of Egypt, Mohammed Morsi, broker a cease-fire agreement between Israel and the Hamas rulers in Gaza. It is a fragile agreement that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu warned would be broken if Hamas resumes the launching of rockets. For their part, Hamas declared victory and reiterated their goal of eliminating Israel. A couple of days later other terrorists blew up a bus in Tel Aviv, injuring 23 people.

On Nov. 29 the U.N. General Assembly strongly approved the recognition of Palestine as a non-member state. Its territory was defined as the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza strip, much of which is controlled by Israel. They will still need to negotiate a peace deal with Israelis to achieve real independence. The U.S. was critical of the vote because it will make it more difficult to obtain lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

During the last week of the year there were two other setbacks to the peace process. Hamas leaders began to call for a third intifada (uprising) including a resumption of suicide
bombings. Some Israelis are taking the threat seriously. Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said, "We are on the verge of a third intifada. I don't know what will spark the great conflagration." 8

Then Mahmoud Abbas changed the legal name of the Palestinian Authority to “State of Palestine.” He also blamed Israel for impeding the peace process and threatened to give up control of the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. He said, "I'll tell him...Sit in the chair here instead of me, take the keys, and you will be responsible for the Palestinian Authority." 9

The current wave of violence could die out and become one of many such cycles in the area, or it could lead to more serious war. On the other hand, the outcome of this war could be a most welcome peace agreement.

Such a peace agreement might be just another phase in the age-old struggle between these people, or it could be the false peace mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

When Israel finally is at peace, it will be the first time since they became a nation in 1948 that they have enjoyed such security. This could cause them to lower their guard, which would set the scene for yet another war, such as the one predicted in Ezekiel 38 and 39 and described earlier in this chapter.

The dramatic end of this war could produce the treaty predicted in Daniel 9:27, which many prophecy scholars identify as the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period.

See: Mideast War, Peace, Israel
CHAPTER 3

RUMORS OF WARS

A variety of important issues in our current world would qualify under Jesus’ prediction of “rumors of war” (Mark 13:7).

Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions

The most pressing “rumor of war” is Iran’s nuclear ambition. Every few days some news emanated about their progress in enriching uranium; sanctions by other countries that affected Iran’s banking, shipping and industrial sectors; the possibility of a pre-emptive attack by Israel or the U.S.; and military movements in the area.

Though they deny it, the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency affirms that Iran is pursuing the development of nuclear weapons and is actually very close to reaching its goal. The leaders of Iran have repeatedly called for a world without Israel, so, unlike nuclear powers of the past, it is likely that they will use their weapons of mass destruction against Israel if they are allowed to produce them. This is especially likely since the leadership of Iran expects the Twelfth Imam, the Islamic Mahdi, to appear soon to bring order to the world. Unfortunately their prophecies indicate that their messiah will come after a great apocalyptic event occurs. From that point of view, they would even be willing to sacrifice their own country in a nuclear exchange that would eliminate Israel.

In 2011 an unexpected series of developments set back Iran’s progress. Israel and the U.S. apparently created a computer virus called the Stuxnet worm. It caused the first-ever major computer attack against a specific target. It seriously disrupted Iran’s centrifuges that were enriching uranium.

Also that year, the U.S. and/or Israeli operatives assassinated nuclear scientists and caused major explosions at the Amir-al-Mo’menin Iranian Revolutionary Guard missile base where they were preparing for attacks against Israel, and at their Isfahan nuclear enrichment facility. No one “took credit” for these accidents, but shortly afterward Iran announced the arrest of at least 15 “American and Zionist” spies.

Here are some of the major developments in the Iran drama during 2012:

In January, on the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s Supreme Leader, called Israel a "cancer" and offered assistance to any nation or group that will confront them.

President Obama affirmed Iran’s right to develop nuclear power, but not nuclear weapons.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Herbert Carlisle introduced a new 13,600-kilogram bunker-buster bomb that would be able to smash through a 200-feet concrete bunker.

The U.S. sent 9000 troops to Israel to prepare for “Austere Challenge 2012,” the largest-ever joint missile drill by the two countries, and about the same time our government warned that Iran would not be allowed to obtain nuclear weapons. The war games were rescheduled for the last quarter of the year, presumably because of "budgetary constraints" but observers think the
real reason is disagreement between the US and Israel about the escalating tension with Iran. Israeli sources had intimated that they might strike Iran's nuclear facilities by April.

A few days later another nuclear scientist was killed by a bomb placed on his car by a motorcyclist in Iran. The mysterious event took place in the capital city of Tehran. The victim was Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan. A city official blamed Israel for the attack. It was similar to attacks on nuclear scientists a year earlier.

Through three different channels President Obama sent a letter to Iran's Foreign Ministry saying that that the U.S. recognizes Iran's right to peaceful nuclear technology.

In May the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) said that Iran had enough uranium for at least five nuclear weapons if refined much further.

Also in May, a new computer worm, dubbed "Flame" infected computers in Iran and other Middle Eastern countries. It was called "the most sophisticated virus of all times." Similarities to the Stuxnet virus make it likely that it was developed by the same expert programmers, but it does not damage equipment like Stuxnet did. Instead, it steals important information. It has been able to overcome 43 different anti-virus programs.

In June Iran claimed to have arrested at least 20 agents tied directly to Israel for participating in the assassination of three of their nuclear scientists.

By August Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said “a nuclear Iran is taking shape right before our eyes.”

White House spokesman Jay Carney countered that the U.S. believes there was still time for diplomacy. The implication was that a pre-emptive attack by Israel would not be supported by the U.S. at that time.

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency were not allowed to check the Fordo site in Iran where more than 2,000 newly-installed centrifuges were operating. It wasn’t known until later but the power lines supplying the facilities were sabotaged causing several of the advanced IR-1 and IR-4 centrifuges producing the 20-percent grade uranium to burst into flames.

In September the UN nuclear agency passed a sixth resolution against Iran's nuclear activities. The resolution expressed "serious concern" about Tehran's refusal to suspend uranium enrichment. Thirty-one of 35 member states voted in favor of the resolution.

Fereydoun Abbasi, Iran's nuclear chief, admitted that “terrorists and saboteurs” had destroyed power lines in order to try to derail Iran’s nuclear program. However, he added that their new enrichment facility at Fordo about 70 kilometers (40 miles) south of Tehran was buried deep into a mountainside and could survive an enemy attack.

Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said that Iran is "ready for a big war." He added, “Of course this confrontation has always continued; however, since we are in the era of The Coming, this war will be a significant war.” This was a reminder that the Iranian leaders are driven by their Shia belief that a great war will bring about the return of the “12th Imam,” who will kill all the infidels and raise the flag of Islam in all corners of the world.

In September Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad delivered his last message to 120 world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly. His presidential term will end in the middle of 2013. He said, his role was “to voice the divine and humanitarian message…to you and to the whole world,” that soon God will send Imam Al-Mahdi [the Twelfth Imam] to earth to “bring about an eternally bright future for mankind." He said this great change would come about without waging wars.
However, Shia eschatology experts say that the opposite is true. They say that Muslim political leaders are supposed to set into motion the chaos that will hasten the arrival of the Twelfth Imam.

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the same U.N. General Assembly. He indicated that the "red line" for taking action against Iran's nuclear development might be pushed back to the spring or early summer of 2013. This was apparently the result of the successful sabotage of the power lines supplying Iran's Fordo facilities in August.

In October it was revealed that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s personal cameraman, Hassan Golkhanban, defected from the Iranian entourage after the UN sessions. He gave the CIA the most complete and updated photographs and videos of secret Iranian nuclear installations they have ever had.

It also came to light that Iran conducted an emergency shut-down of its new Bushehr nuclear reactor in October. Loose bolts discovered under the fuel rods could have caused an explosion of the nuclear power plant, which in turn could have caused a million Iranian deaths and exposed the citizens of the Persian Gulf emirates to radiation. It is thought that the bolts were either deliberately unscrewed and dropped into the reactor vessel or the Stuxnet virus had reactivated and tampered with the reactor’s computers. Russia sent emergency teams to Bushehr to deal with the emergency.

Iran evidently did some damage of its own in October. American intelligence officials believe that a serious wave of network attacks that crippled computers across the Saudi oil industry and breached financial institutions in the United States originated in Iran.

Toward the end of October Israel and the U.S. conducted their delayed joint military exercises, employing 1000 U.S. military personnel and an equal number of Israeli service members. The exercise was called “Austere Challenge 2012.”

In November the Associated Press obtained a diagram from Iran showing the computer simulation of a nuclear weapon. Such a bomb would have more than three times the explosive force of the one that destroyed Hiroshima during World War II.

Many think it is likely that Iran will cross the “red line” with their nuclear developments by the end of 2013. Adding to the uncertainty, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's term ends in June, 2013. Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is thought to be ill and may also be replaced.

See: Iran, Gog and Magog, Cyberwar

*Egypt’s New Pharaoh*

Egypt began the year 2012 with a great deal of uncertainty. The Arab Spring revolt from the previous year had successfully deposed President Hosni Mubarak, but the government was in the hands of the military until elections could be held.

The Muslim Brotherhood, which was portrayed during the uprising as a minor player in Egypt’s future, emerged as the political leader even before elections were held. The Brotherhood had been formed in the 1920’s as a reaction to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. It spawned the Hamas terrorists in the Palestinian areas, assisted Al Qaida, assassinated an Egyptian prime minister, and had been banned by the Egyptian government until the Arab Spring.

One of the major issues raised by the changing scene was whether or not Egypt would continue to honor the peace treaty with Israel that had been in effect since 1979. Other questions
were: Will the military allow free elections and a democratic government? And will the country adopt Sharia law? If it does, what will happen to the rights of women and non-Muslims, especially the Christians, numbering more than 8 million? Will the Egyptian revolution resemble Iran’s Islamic revolution of 1979?

In May and June elections were held and Mohammed Morsi won the race for the presidency. Morsi was the Muslim Brotherhood’s candidate, running under their new Freedom and Justice party.

While the elections were being confirmed, the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (Scaf), dissolved Egypt’s Parliament because of election irregularities, declared for itself legislative powers, control over the budget, and control over who writes the permanent constitution. It also stripped the president of any authority over the army. The move was seen as a military coup by many.

In June former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was found guilty of permitting the killing of at least 800 protesters during the 18-day revolt that overthrew him in February of 2011. He was sentenced to life in prison.

In August sixteen Egyptian soldiers were killed by terrorists in the Sinai Peninsula. The new president, Mohammed Morsi used the incident to take control of the country’s military junta, and claimed unprecedented executive power and complete authority over legislation. He assumed the power to intervene in the constitution-writing process, to delay legislative elections—and thereby remain Egypt's sole legislator—indefinitely. Because of all of this, Morsi is being called Egypt’s new Pharaoh.

Ever since the Arab Spring in 2011, persecution of Christians in the country has increased. In September their situation was made much worse when two Egyptian immigrants who were apparently Coptic Christians were involved in the production of the “Innocence of Muslims,” a video trailer that inflamed anger throughout the Middle East. An Egyptian military official said that Islamic groups are threatening to slaughter “the whole Christian Coptic community” in the city of Naja Hamadi, located about 60 miles from Cairo.

In September, during his first address before the U.N. General Assembly, President Morsi championed the Islamic view of world events and Egypt’s role in them. He also said that Egypt stands for the rights of Palestinians and for an end to what he called illegal occupation of Arab lands, a reference to Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Since that time researchers have uncovered statements by Morsi, before he was president, that show his disdain for Israel. A recent translation of his interview in 2010 by Lebanon’s Al-Quds TV network quoted him saying that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are a “waste of time and opportunities” because Arabs and Muslims gain nothing from engagement with “the descendants of apes and pigs.”

Morsi is not alone in his feelings about Israel. Mohammed Badie, Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood publicly stated that it is futile to have negotiations with Israel. He said, “Zionists only understand the language of force and will not relent without duress. This will only happen through holy Jihad, high sacrifices and all forms of resistance.”

In November President Morsi did help obtain a cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, and gained for himself some attention as a peace-maker. However, it was very much to the advantage of Hamas to stop fighting after the short war.

The day after the cease-fire Morsi issued a decree that exempts all his decisions from legal challenge until a new parliament is elected. Hundreds of protestors called him a “temporary dictator,” and the new “pharaoh.”
On December 26 the new constitution was approved by a seriously flawed election process. It does not bode well for democracy, and especially for the rights of women and religious minorities. In fact, Bishop Kyrillos William, Administrator of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate of Alexandria, is one of three bishops who expressed their profound disappointment with the constitution. He said, “We were waiting for a constitution that represents the whole of Egypt but instead we have one that only represents one group of people. We can see that the religious orientation of this constitution prepares the way for an Islamic caliphate.”

There are various prophecies that relate to Egypt’s future. We discussed them in Chapter 2 under “Future Wars – According to Bible Prophecy.” In any case, we can see that there is major trouble ahead for Egypt.

See: Egypt

Terrorism

Terrorism has been a factor in our world for a long time, but since the attacks on September 11, 2001, the fear of other great terrorist acts has been a constant matter of concern. Osama bin Laden is dead, but Al Qaida is stronger than ever and active in many countries from Pakistan to Africa.

Our own Ambassador to Libya and three other Americans were killed by an Al Qaida attack there a few months ago, and no one has been brought to justice about the matter.

As mentioned above, The Muslim Brotherhood, which spawned the Hamas terrorists in Gaza, and was banned in Egypt before the Arab Spring, has now taken control of the Egyptian government and caused great persecution of Christians in the country.

Hezbollah in Lebanon is a terrorist puppet of the Iranian government.

A branch of Al Qaida in Libya was responsible for the assassination of Chris Stevens, the U.S. ambassador to Libya on 9/11/12 the anniversary of Al Qaida’s attack on our country in New York and Washington D.C. eleven years ago. A special investigation concluded in December, that there were "leadership and management deficiencies at senior levels within two bureaus." The two bureaus were the State Department and the CIA. It suggested 29 ways the departments could improve its operations, but recommended no disciplinary action. Why is there no discipline recommended? And why did the report apparently not address the issue of the erroneous reports by government officials that the attack was caused by protests against a video on You Tube that was insulting to Mohammed? A Congressional hearing is still trying to get to the bottom of this serious problem.

Al Qaida terrorists have killed scores of members of the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan during this past year.

The last month of the year brought a number of chilling reports about terrorism:

A credible source in Iran warns that some 10 Quds Force officers from Iran are already strategically placed in the U.S. Each one leads terrorist cells that are highly trained to attack U.S. infrastructure in case the U.S. fails to accept Iran's nuclear program, increases sanctions, confronts Iran militarily or intervenes in the Syrian civil war.11

A prominent faction in the Syrian Civil War is the al-Nusra Front, a branch of Al Qaida. The U.S. designated it as a terrorist organization. If the rebels win in this struggle Al Qaida will be in a position of power. Concerned Syrians say the group wants to establish a new caliphate and a Taliban style government.
In Yemen a branch of Al Qaeda is offering three kilograms of gold ($160,000) to anyone who will kill the U.S. Ambassador to Yemen and 5 million Yemeni riyals ($23,000) for anyone who kills an American soldier inside Yemen.

Dr. Shakeel Afridi, the jailed CIA informant who helped hunt down Osama Bin Laden, has recently been tortured in prison in Pakistan. According to California Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, the Obama administration has abandoned the doctor to be tormented by the same people who hid Osama Bin Laden for years.

**Understanding Islam**

Christians need to affirm their love for Muslims (Christ died for all men), and stand against any persecution against them based on their religion or ethnicity. We should also seek to enter into dialog with them where possible, so that they might learn more about Jesus, whom they respect as a prophet, but do not accept as savior. At the same time, we should be entirely opposed to the wanton murder of innocent people by terrorists. And we should not give the false impression, so prevalent in our culture today, that all beliefs are equal. Jesus said He is the only way to God the Father (**John 14:6**).

Radical Islam has continued to grow. We are told that only 10% of Muslims hold these dangerous ideas, but even at that, it would mean more than 100 million of them support terrorist tactics. Their aim is to control the world. Intelligence experts warn that another great attack is likely in America. Few Muslim mosques stand effectively against violence. Instead, they tend to serve as places of recruitment for jihadists. Outdated immigration policies and weak border control allow the continued flow of trained terrorists into our country. Americans and their leaders need to wake up and find ways to stop this trend before it is too late for us.

**-Differences between Sunni and Shia Muslims**

Iraq and Afghanistan – both countries that have been subdued and supposedly rehabilitated by the U.S. since the beginning of the War on Terrorism – are deeply divided between the two major sects of Islamic belief.

Most people don’t really care about the differences between these branches of Islam and are not willing to go to the effort of learning about them. This is unfortunate because understanding the world in which we are living requires at least a basic concept of Islam and its major divisions.

The majority of Muslims are Sunni (80 to 90%). Shia (Shite) Muslims are the minority (5 to 20%).

The original difference between the two groups is their concept of the line of authority descending from Muhammad. It is a primarily political distinction but they have accumulated some religious differences over time. About.com gives this introduction:

The division between Shia (Shi’ite) and Sunni dates back to the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and the question of who was to take over the leadership of the Muslim nation. Sunni Muslims agree with the position taken by many of the Prophet's companions, that the new leader should be elected from among those capable of the job. The Sunni (from a related Arabic word that means "one who follows the traditions of the Prophet.") accepted the first four Caliphs, starting with Muhammad's friend Abu Bakr, as the rightful successors to lead the Muslim nation. Sunnis accept the writings of these official Caliphs, known as the Hadith ("traditions" of the Prophet's life and spiritual practice). Osama bin Laden was a Sunni Muslim as are the Muslim Brotherhood.
The Shia (shortened form of the Arabic "Shia-t-Ali" - "The Party of Ali") believe that the rightful successor was the prophet's cousin/son-in-law, Ali. Ali and the leaders who followed him were all supposed to have been appointed by either the Prophet Muhammad or Allah himself. There were twelve of these leaders or Imams. Many Shia today are known as "Twelvers" because they believe the Twelfth Imam went into hiding and will return as a messiah at the End of Days. The Shia reject the Hadith and only follow the Qur'an (Koran). Iran's Ayatollah and their President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are Shia Muslims.

Predominately Sunni Areas (Many countries in each area)
- Africa - Including recent countries in the news: Egypt, Libya
- Arab world - Including recent countries in the news: Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria
- South Asia - Including recent countries in the news: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey

Predominately Shia (Shi’ite) Countries
- Azerbaijan
- Bahrain
- Iran
- Iraq

The Muslim population in Lebanon is about half Sunni and half Shia.

-Calls for a Caliphate

A Caliph is the ruler of the Islamic world. The last caliphate was the Ottoman Empire, which was disbanded at the end of World War I. There are calls for unity among Muslims emanating today from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran and Turkey. If a new Islamic caliphate were to emerge, it would certainly seek to include the European countries where Muslim culture is becoming predominant. Such a coalition would resemble the old Roman Empire at its greatest extent, and could be what was predicted in Daniel, chapter 2, where it depicts the final world empire, symbolized by iron (Rome) and clay (Islamic Caliphate?).

See: Terrorism, Islam

EMP Threat

Another “rumor of war” issue is the electromagnetic pulse (EMP) threat – the possibility of a high-altitude (25 to 250 miles above the earth) nuclear explosion over our own country that would do irreparable damage.

This is not a new concept. Congress was warned in 2008 that Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and terrorists either have, or will soon have the ability to strike us in this way.

One nuclear device, launched from a ship at sea, and detonated over the Gulf of Mexico or some other central target in the atmosphere above our country could devastate most of our electronic devices and the electric power grids. This would bring all normal activities in the nation to an abrupt halt and could result in the death of most Americans within a year and a half.

A dramatic series on NBC this year called "Revolution" explored what life might be like in the United States 15 years after an EMP attack, disables all electronics. The result could be mass extinction. Survivors might gather into self-styled militias, private armies and warring tribes.
According to the Heritage Foundation, "The result of a massive EMP event could be devastating. Communications would collapse, transportation would halt, and electrical power would simply be nonexistent.

Of course, other nations could also be devastated by an EMP attack. A Times of Israel article noted that Israel, in a desperate scenario, could level such a blow to Iran, and send them "back to the stone age."

It is also known that a large solar storm – caused by a coronal mass ejection (CME) from the Sun – could cause similar damage. Scientists say that such a solar storm maximum could occur sometime between now and 2014, with the most likely peak of its 11-year cycle occurring in 2013.

See: Wars and Rumors of War

**Cyberwar**

Cyberwar is the ability of computer programmers to shut down vital processes and steal secret information. It was just science-fiction a few years ago, but now it is a serious threat to every nation.

In 2011 a mysterious “Stuxnet computer worm” apparently incapacitated one-fifth of Iran’s centrifuges, setting back their nuclear timetable. Meir Dagan, - Israel's retiring chief of the Mossad intelligence agency, all but admitted that the virus was developed by U.S. and Israeli experts. It was the first case of a computer virus being able to affect a specific target in this way.

At the end of 2011 a group of Chinese hackers invaded the computer network of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, gaining access to everything stored on its systems, including information about its three million members.

In January, even though Chinese law prohibits any cyberattacks, Huang Chunping, director of science and technology for the Beijing Institute of Technology, expressed the view that all available members of the population should be enlisted in China's "cyberwar mobilization" program.

In May Iran and other Middle Eastern countries were upset about a new computer worm, dubbed "Flame." It is being called "the most sophisticated virus of all times." Similarities to the Stuxnet virus make it likely that it was developed by the same expert programmers, but it does not damage equipment like Stuxnet did. Instead, it steals important information.

Flame can gather data files, remotely change settings on computers, turn on PC microphones to record conversations, take screen shots and log instant messaging chats.

It is believed that the U.S. and Israel produced the complex virus.

Once the Flame virus had done its work, it removed all traces of itself from the infected computers so that experts could not study it.

In June, at a cybersecurity conference at Tel Aviv University, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Eugene Kaspersky, CEO of Russian information security firm Kaspersky Labs, which recently discovered the Flame virus, spoke about the current state of cyberterrorism and what needs to be done in the future.

Barak said Israel must be at the forefront of the global cyberarena, developing defense systems and in preparing civilian infrastructure against attack.

Kaspersky said that current trends could have far-reaching repercussions. He said, "It's not cyberwar, it's cyberterrorism and I'm afraid it's just the beginning of the game ... I'm afraid it will be the end of the world as we know it."
Kaspersky also told reporters at the conference that a cyberattacks would look like [the 2007 Hollywood film] 'Live Free or Die Hard.'

Another piece of spyware, named Mahdi, copied files from more than 800 victims in the Middle East, including Iran and Israel.

Mahdi, which is named after files used in the malware, refers to the Muslim messiah who, it’s prophesied, will arrive before the end of time to cleanse the world of wrongdoing and bestow peace and justice before Judgment Day.

In July a revised version of the Cybersecurity Act of 2012 was introduced to the Senate. Connecticut senator Joe Lieberman said, “The threat is extremely dire. I am literally worried that an attack could be imminent.” Leon Panetta, the Secretary of Defense, said that he is convinced that the next Pearl Harbor-like attack on America will be launched from cyber space and there are some countries out there that are prepared and have the capability to do it now.

Another aspect of cyberwar came to light in October. Boeing Phantom Works announced the successful test of a missile that can fry the electronics of equipment in buildings on the ground. A spokesman said, “This technology marks a new era in modern-day warfare... In the near future, this technology may be used to render an enemy’s electronic and data systems useless even before the first troops or aircraft arrive.”

In October Israel announced that it has a National Cyber Committee that is developing a “Digital Iron Dome” system to protect Israel against daily cyber-attacks. He said it will be “the security fence against infiltrators and terrorism.”

In the same month it was revealed that Iran has conducted cyber-attacks on regional rivals, including a Saudi oil facility. They had also flown a stealth drone into Israel. The drone came from a secret Hezbollah base in south Beirut. This installation also serves as Iran's global cyber war room. Iran uses this remote facility to disguise the source of its cyber offensives and keep Iran clear of blame.

In December the Pentagon released a document detailing plans to deploy cyberweapons and to establish a management facility in Arlington, Va. to bring it all together. The document is called “Foundational Cyberwarfare (Plan X). It is a map of cyberspace – how computers connect, and plans for “support platforms” that can deploy cyberweapons, measure damage, strengthen defenses and communicate.

See: Cyberwar

New Cold War

A new Cold War between the United States and Russia has been growing for several years. Russia objects to the NATO missile defense network in Europe. The U.S. objects to Russia’s support of Iran and Syria in the current Middle East conflicts. Russia’s geopolitical strategy is threatened by the civil war in Syria. Russia has a naval port there at Tartous, and has recently sent additional warships to the region. As mentioned above, under Syria’s Civil War, The U.S. and other nations sent Patriot missiles to Turkey to protect them against Syrian attack, and Russia countered immediately by delivering 24 “fearsome” Iskander 9K720 cruise missile systems to Syria, breaking its promise to the U.S. not to let Syria or Iran have such weapons.

Russia also has a vested interest in Iran, where it has helped build a nuclear reactor and doesn’t openly support that country’s right to develop nuclear weapons, but is still protective of their interests. They have supplied sophisticated weapons to Iran and submarines.
In September a new book, "Disinformation," was announced by Lt. Gen Ion Mihai Pacepa, the highest-ranking Soviet bloc intelligence official ever to defect to the West. The book will be released early in 2013. He explains that the anti-American fervor in the Islamic world was purposely stimulated by the old Soviet Union, and is now reaching its full divisive potential. He says, "In 1972, I had a breakfast with then-KGB chairman Yury Andropov in Moscow. The Kremlin, he told me, had decided to transform Arab anti-Semitism into an anti-American doctrine for the whole Muslim world."

The Soviets produced literature that portrayed the United States as a war-mongering, Zionist country financed by Jewish money. Pacepa added that Andropov made the point that one billion adversaries could cause far greater damage than could a mere 150 million.

Another blow to U.S. - Russian relations, after the U.S. passed human rights laws that bar entry to Russians accused of involvement in the death of anti-corruption lawyer Sergei Magnitsky and other alleged rights abuses.

Russian President Vladimir Putin retaliated by signing a law that bans Americans from adopting Russian children. Putin defended the law by saying his country should care for its own children. But critics, including child rights advocates, say it is an unfair move that uses orphans as pawns in an unrelated dispute.

See: Cold War, Gog and Magog

North Korea, Pakistan, and Turkey

North Korea has been considered part of an “evil axis” since George Bush’s presidency. Their old dictator Kim Jong-il died in 2011, but his son Kim Jong-un seems determined to keep the same antagonistic course. They have had nuclear weapons since 2009, but have lacked the ability to deliver them until now.

They conducted two missile tests this year. The one in April was a failure, but their December test successfully placed a satellite into orbit. Experts say the Unha-3 rocket would be able to deliver a nuclear weapon as far away as the West coast of the United States.

It is known that they have worked closely with Iran in the development of nuclear weapons and delivery systems for more than 25 years.

Pakistan is also a nuclear nation. It is the only Islamic country so far to have this capability. They have been a fragile partner with the U.S. in the War on Terror and an impediment to our relationship with India.

They apparently ignored the fact that Osama bin Laden lived in one of their major cities near a military base for a long time before a stealth mission from the U.S. attacked him and ended his life. And now, instead of rewarding Dr. Shakeel Afridi, the heroic doctor who supplied vital information to the CIA about bin Laden, he is being tortured in prison in Pakistan.

Turkey has taken a surprise turn this year from a possible candidate for a European Union nation to a powerful, very Islamic leader. Turkey is a member of NATO. However, terrorism expert Walid Shobat warns that it is no longer a friend to Israel, but is seeking to restore the old Ottoman Empire and re-establish its influence in the Turkic countries of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It appears to be reaching out to Russia and Iran as well.
In August of 2011, Turkey’s top four military chiefs resigned, giving Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan greater control over the military.

In June, Middle East expert Thomas Friedman opined that Turkey is an island of relative stability between two great geopolitical systems that are cracking apart: the euro zone... and the Arab state system that came into being after World War I.

Also in June, during the closing ceremony of the Turkish Olympics, Prime Minister Erdogan expressed a desire for his spiritual mentor, Fethullah Gülen, to end his self-imposed exile to Pennsylvania, and return to Turkey. Gülen is considered by many to be the most dangerous Islamist in the world. He oversees a vast network of over 1,000 charter schools in over 140 countries. There are nearly 150 in the United States alone. His concept of Turkish Islamism is said to teach “moderation along with the Western concepts of democracy, interfaith dialogue and tolerance as a cover while it works to achieve its goals of Turkish Islamic dominance and a return to the glories of the Ottoman Empire.”

In October, after Turkey had begun to oppose the continued reign of Syria’s president Bashar Al Assad, Egypt’s new president Morsi encouraged an emerging partnership between Egypt and Turkey.

See: Wars and Rumors of War, War in America, Terrorism, Turkey

Chinese Threat

The dramatic growth of China in our generation is often ignored in prophetic calculations. It is not a traditional foe of Israel, and had not been considered a major threat to the end times world empire until recently. It is the most populous nation on earth, and recently has made a huge impact on world economies.

It allows a state-approved Christian presence but severely persecutes the immense house-church movement.

China is involved in a massive military build-up that threatens Taiwan, South Korea, and other Asian countries. It is apparently involved in extensive cyber-attacks on the Internet.

In previous years we have reported some of the highlights of China’s military buildup: its Dong Feng 21D “aircraft carrier killer” missile, a new stealth fighter that is probably a copy of our own technology, electromagnetic pulse weapons (EMP) to use against U.S. aircraft carriers in future conflicts over Taiwan, it’s first aircraft carrier - a 990 ft. refitted former Soviet warship, and a formidable Cyberwarfare force.

China was already an economic powerhouse, and it was on its way to being a military superpower as well. Toward the end of 2011, Sir Max Hastings, a British journalist, editor, historian and author, wrote an article entitled, “Will World War III Be between the U.S. and China?”

In February of 2012 China joined Russia in vetoing a resolution against the government of Syria, but by April China notified the U.S. that it is no longer supporting Syria.

In September China’s first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, began service. It had no operational aircraft yet, but will be used for training.

China will be a participant in the Battle of Armageddon, as one of the "Kings of the East" that will cross the dried-up Euphrates river to join the campaign (Revelation 16:12).
Economic trends have a strong influence in shaping the development of national and international affairs. Prophecy students are expecting the emergence of an end times world government which will not be led by the United States.

Ever since the world-wide economic melt-down that began in 2008, the U.S. has also suffered economically. At the moment we have avoided the so-called “fiscal cliff,” but have put off the difficult decisions about what can be cut from our runaway spending. We are in danger of leaving an unmanageable debt to our children. If our governmental leaders cannot find a way to turn this crisis around, we will gradually lose our leadership and become less important on the world scene. This could very well be the reason the U.S. is not mentioned in prophecy.

The troubled world economy will make people willing to accept the control of a governmental system or even a benevolent dictator who appears to have the ideas and influence to improve the situation.

In Daniel, chapter 2, Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. It was about a series of world empires. The first four have come and gone but a final evil empire is yet to come.  

37 You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory: 38 and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. 39 But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. 40 And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. 41 Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. 43 As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.

– Daniel 2:37-42

If the United States declines, leaving no world superpower, the time might be right for the emergence of that entity out of the political and economic chaos of the world. We will consider this more toward the end of this chapter.

The rest of the prophecy in Daniel 2 refers to the coming of Christ to earth to set up His righteous Kingdom.

44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. 45 Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.” – Daniel 2:44-45
Recession
Ever since 2008 our country, and most of the world, has suffered devastating losses because of a serious recession – almost as bad as the great depression. Property values plummeted, the stock market was unpredictable, businesses failed, record numbers of people could not find work, salaries declined, and the median net worth of U.S. families plunged from $126,400 in 2007 to $57,000 in 2012. This wiped out the gains of at least a decade of prosperity for the poor and middle class. Predictably, the nations’ wealthiest 10 percent saw their wealth rise 8 percent and the richest 1 percent gained 71 percent!13

Government Spending
Meanwhile the federal government shirked its duty to take care of business. Congress failed for a third year to even adopt a budget or to deal with skyrocketing federal spending. The national debt rose during the year from an already staggering $15.2 trillion to $16.4 trillion. This amounts to $52,181 for every person living in the U.S.; or $135,713 for every household in the U.S.14 Time will tell if the government can improve the situation during this year, but it is questionable because of the polarization of the parties at this time.

Obamacare
Health costs are soaring all the more now that we have a national health care law. The Supreme Court considered appeals that claimed that the individual mandate -- the requirement that most Americans buy health insurance or pay a fine – was unconstitutional. At the end of June the high court decided that the charge was constitutional, not as a fine, but as a tax.

It appears that the health care expenses imposed on businesses by the new law are a huge impediment to the growth of commerce and industry.

Christians also had grave concerns about the morality of the section that forces taxpayers to fund abortions. We will consider this more in Chapter 11.

Inflation
In April Yale economist and author Robert Shiller said that the world economy is experiencing a "late Great Depression," and is in a “new age of austerity.” He says that the Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank, the Bank of Japan and the Bank of England have propped up their respective economies by injecting new money printed out of thin air.

Economists know that printing more money than is warranted by the economy leads to runaway inflation. Inflation destroys the value of cash savings, which is especially harmful to retired people. It can also result in destruction of an entire nation’s economy, like what happened in Germany before World War II.

See: Economic Issues

The Presidential Elections
Evangelicals were very interested in the outcome of the Presidential elections in November. Christians need to be involved in the elective process, not to champion one political party over another, but to call the nation back to its moral roots. In this particular campaign there were many moral issues: gay marriage, abortion, truth in the media, freedom of religion, inclusion of God in party platforms, work ethics, and the financial direction of the country –
which is drifting toward socialism and a growing debt that would be difficult or impossible for our children to handle.

The future of the United States is not defined in Bible prophecy. A weak or ungodly government here would just make it easier for the future evil world dictator, the Beast, to exert his influence.

The issues of the election provided us with another opportunity for Christians to return to The Lord and be revived, but that did not happen.


World-wide Economic Problems

Europe and most of the world has followed the U.S. into economic crisis during these past few years. There are some exceptions – countries that are not tied to our economy, such as China and Turkey, which have enjoyed considerable economic growth recently.

The European Union has suffered much from the financial malaise. The political strength of the massive population has been sorely tested by the grave economy of Greece, Spain, and other parts of the Union. Many difficulties have been encountered with the use of their common currency, the euro.

In the midst of all of these challenges, the European Union was surprised to be the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in October. The Nobel committee acknowledged that the EU was in dire straits with defects of the euro, and the near collapse of many member states. These situations have plunged all of Europe into the worst recession for 80 years.

However, the coveted peace prize was a great encouragement to the region. The Nobel Prize committee said,

“The union and its forerunners have for over six decades contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.”

See: Economic Issues, Revived Roman Empire

A Fresh Start: New World Order

The decline of the U.S. as the only superpower on a planet in turmoil provides the perfect setting for the emergence of a powerful and charismatic world dictator.

There has already been great interest in a one-world government. Many in our generation have called it the “New World Order.” From an economic point of view it makes business sense, and from a political point of view, something like this must occur to save us from our endless wars.

The implication that there is a conspiracy to produce a universal government is accepted by many prophecy scholars, but rejected by others. There is no doubt that there will be a one-world government, but there are differing views on the processes that lead to it. Some have called this an "open conspiracy," meaning one that is not totally hidden, but is more of a one-world agenda by the rich and powerful. This elite group publishes their ideas, but the public is never made aware of their ultimate plans.

Final Evil Empire - Iron and Clay

40 And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and
crush all the others. 41 Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. 43 As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. – Daniel 2:40-43

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was a prophecy of world empires that started with his own Babylon. Historically, the second empire was Medo-Persia, the third was Greece, and the fourth was Rome – depicted as iron.

The fifth one is a sort of "Revived Roman Empire" in the last days – partly of iron. The European Union (EU) could very possibly be the head of this final world government. It is located in the same area as the old Roman Empire, and is expanding its influence year by year.

The first step toward the formation of a European super state was the Benelux Agreement on June 8, 1948. This was a treaty between three very small countries, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Several years later, in 1957, in the city of Rome, and with a document called "The Treaty of Rome," those three countries joined with three other countries, Italy, France, and Germany to make the EEC (European Economic Community) which was called the Common Market for many years. Today the organization is known as the EU (European Union). In 1973 the United Kingdom joined the EU along with Ireland and Denmark, making a total of nine nations. In 1981 Greece became the tenth member of the union.

Spain and Portugal joined in 1986, and in 1995 Austria, Finland and Sweden were added to the official list.

In July of 2008 the EU spawned a related organization known as The Union for the Mediterranean which includes European, Middle Eastern and African nations all around the Mediterranean Sea. A map of all these nations looks very much like the old Roman Empire.

At the heart of all of this growth, the original 10 nations formed a separate powerful defense entity, The Western European Union (WEU). By 2011 its function was no longer needed, so it was disbanded.

By 2009 there were 27 member states of the union. The success of this European merger is a further impetus to global unity.

In 2011 the European Union generated the largest nominal world gross domestic product (GDP) of 17.6 trillion US dollars, representing approximately 20% of the global GDP.

Protests and revolutions in various Islamic countries around the Mediterranean Sea in 2011 raise the specter of a new Islamic caliphate that might merge with the European countries where Muslim culture is becoming predominant. Such a coalition would resemble the old Roman Empire at its greatest extent, and could be what was predicted in Daniel, chapter 2 -the final world empire, symbolized by iron (Rome) and clay (Islamic caliphate?).

There are other possibilities for this final evil world empire. Some think it could be centered in the United Nations or be a new Islamic Caliphate. At present, these alternatives are not compelling.

In any case, there will be a powerful dictator over this final New World Order. Revelation 13 calls him the Beast. We will learn more about his reign in Chapter 9 – Technology and the Mark of the Beast.

See: New World Order
CHAPTER 5

FALSE CHRIST, FALSE PROPHECIES/ FALSE SIGNS AND WONDERS

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”
4 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.

– Matthew 24:3-4

The glorious truths of God's Word and especially of The Gospel are attacked in every generation by the activities of false messiahs (Greek christos - "anointed one") and teachers whose words do not agree with the Bible. The first thing Jesus taught his disciples about the future is that there will be false Christs.

Jesus also taught that during the Tribulation the problem of false teachers and prophets will be even worse.

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. - Matt. 24:11 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

– Matthew 24:23-24

Antichrist: The Beast, the False Prophet and the Devil

At the midpoint of the Tribulation an "unholy trinity" will impose a one-world government and one-world religion on the people. This evil trinity includes the Dragon (the Devil), the first beast (evil world dictator), and another beast, whom most prophecy scholars call "the False Prophet."

11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. - Revelation 13:11-17

We cannot know who Antichrist will be before he is revealed during the Tribulation (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12), and even then most people will consider him a messiah who can finally deliver the world from its’ great problems. But what we can know is that the world is getting
more ready than ever before for a powerful charismatic leader who might be able to turn things around.

One obvious preparation for Antichrist is the rapidly-advancing technology that will undoubtedly be used for him to impose the Mark of the Beast at the mid-point of the Tribulation. Quantum leaps in computer technology, the Internet, and devices like the smartphone are undoubtedly paving the way for that time of economic dictatorship. We will explore this in Chapter 9.

See: Antichrist, Mark of the Beast

False Christs/False Prophecies
False Christs, false prophets, false teachers and their messages are also a problem. Here are some examples of the charlatans who take advantage of people's fears and faith.

In May a cult called “Growing in Grace International” put up billboards in Canada featuring the number "666" as a symbol of their group's messianic leader, Jose de Luis de Jesus. De Jesus' headquarters is in Texas, but he claims followers from more than 130 countries. Many of them have "666" tattooed on their wrists.

They thought that a day of reckoning was coming on June 30 or July 1, when most of humanity would be wiped out. They claimed that De Jesus and his followers would be transformed into immortal beings.

Of course, nothing happened on the appointed day.

In September, Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church died at the age of 92. He was a self-proclaimed messiah, and was probably the best-known of his kind. He called both North Korean leaders and American presidents his friends, but spent time in prisons in both countries.

Moon started his own religion in 1954, saying that Jesus Christ personally called on him to complete his work. He was known for performing mass marriages of his followers. Detractors accused him of brainwashing his recruits and extracting money from them. His global business empire owned many businesses including the Washington Times and the New Yorker Hotel. He may have had 100,000 followers or more.

Christianity Today published a story in September of a couple who had been involved with David Jang, a pastor and businessman in Singapore who is called by his followers, the “Second Coming Christ.” He is a messianic figure who claims to be establishing the kingdom of God on earth.

See: False Christs/False Teachers

Mayan Calendar
The so-called Mayan prophecy about the end of the world on Dec. 21, 2012, obviously did not come true. In fairness, it should be said that Mayan experts had told us long ago that the end of their long-count calendar did not really mean destruction. It would only start a new cycle of time.
The doomsday theories rose from a pair of tablets discovered in the 1960s at the archaeological site of Tortuguero in the Gulf of Mexico. They described the return of a Mayan god at the end of the 13th period.

Bible prophecy scholars did not put any stock in this theory. Neither did scientists from NASA. Their website helped keep the calm during the two years before the big date. They provided scientific evidence that nothing disastrous was likely to happen.

There were lots of big “end of the world” parties, but most of the revelers knew that it was just for fun.

For many New Age believers the date was the beginning of the long-heralded “Age of Aquarius.”

See: Concern About the Year 2012

Islamic Prophecies

Christians do not consider Islamic prophecies to be true revelations from God. There are two kinds of prophecies in their belief system. First, there are snippets from the Quran that can be applied to later inventions or discoveries – similar to what is done with Nostradamus’ Quatrains. These are usually vague and were not given as prophecies in the first place.¹⁵

The other Islamic prophecies are those that relate to the end of the world. Some are from the Quran and some from traditions. Some are in agreement with the Bible. This is not surprising since they could be easily copied from the Old and New Testaments which were available to them. Others disagree with the Bible, or are even opposite of biblical teaching. In these cases the Bible narrative was adjusted to fit their own perspective.¹⁶

The prophecy that may be the most interesting to us is the Shia teaching about the Twelfth Imam, mentioned above in Chapter 3 – Iran’s Nuclear Ambitions. They believe that Muhammad al-Mahdi, was born in 869 and did not die, but rather was hidden by God in 941 will emerge when the world is in chaos in order to establish a righteous caliphate. They believe that Jesus Christ, whom they call Isa will come with him to help defeat the evil Dajjal [Satan] and bring peace and justice to the world, killing Jews and breaking the cross.¹⁷

Mormon Prophecies

Mormons consider the Bible God’s Word, but they have other sources that they consider authoritative, including the Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants. Therefore they share many prophetic concepts with Bible-believing Christians. However, one of their prophecies are very different. As an example, Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon religion, claimed he received a revelation in 1831 that the center of the New Jerusalem, with its temple, would be built in Independence, Missouri, and that the gathering of Israel would soon begin. They believe that the city will be built before the Second Coming of Christ.¹⁸

Joseph Smith ran for president of the U.S., and predicted that someday the U.S. Constitution would “hang like a thread as fine as a silk fiber” and the Mormon priesthood would save it. This concept became known circles as the “White Horse Prophecy.”

Mitt Romney did not claim to be the one who would fulfill this prophecy, but there were many Mormons who thought he might be the one.

Astrology
According to a Pew Forum survey in 2009, 25% of Americans claimed to believe in astrology. The word “astrology” means “study of the stars.” However, the modern name for that science is astronomy because from ancient times people have perverted the study of the heavens, thinking that our lives are controlled by the movement of heavenly objects based on what time of the year we are born. Many people are influenced by horoscopes that claim to predict what will happen to a person according to his astronomical “sign.”

There is, of course, such a thing as God-controlled signs in the heavens. Genesis mentions this possibility (Genesis 1:14). The Magi found the newborn Messiah based on such signs (Numbers 24:17; Matthew 2:1-10), and in Chapter 7 of this book we will consider prophecies about signs in the heavens in the end times. But the Bible does not validate belief in horoscopes or any other kind of divination as a means of predicting one’s personal future (2 Kings 17:16-17; 23:4-5; Isaiah 47:12-14).

See: The Gospel in the Stars, How Did the Magi Know?

**False Signs and Wonders**

God is omnipotent, and the Bible is full of miracles. From the creation of Adam and Eve, the 10 plagues leading to the Exodus, the dramatic "signs" given by the Old Testament Prophets, and those accomplished by Jesus and His disciples, Christian theology understands miracles to be a major theme of God's Word. Even in the daily life of believers, the smaller personal miracles of God's direction and gifts of love, wisdom, provision, and peace are to be expected. A special class of miracles, called "signs and wonders" is also recorded in the Scriptures, especially during the periods of new revelation of God's Word (The Pentateuch- First 5 books of the Bible, the Prophets, and the New Testament period). These were major, public miracles, given by God to prove that the words of the Prophets were true. Jesus told those of His generation, after they had seen so many mighty proofs of His miraculous powers that no more signs would be given to them. Still, Christians often experience The Lord's mighty work in their lives, sometimes including healing. Even our prayer habits assume that God still does things that we would consider miraculous.

False prophets of the end times will need false miracles to "validate" their authority and make non-believers fear them. Even in Moses' time the magicians in Pharaoh's court were able to apparently duplicate the first few of the plagues that Moses and Aaron performed.

Such counterfeit "signs and wonders" can be produced in several ways. The most obvious would be skillful illusions like those performed by the best of today's magicians.

Another type of false signs would be religious deception. Those who take the Bible literally have no problem believing in miraculous events; however, both then and now, there are spiritual imitators, who may be energized by demonic powers and psychological manipulation, such as mass hysteria, to "prove" that what they are doing is from God.

In our scientific age there is a third possibility for deceiving people. It is the use of technological deception. This could be accomplished through the use of little-known scientific inventions - the products of "black projects" by the government and other advanced technologies that are virtually unknown to the average person.

In His Olivet Discourse Jesus said,
At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. - Matthew 24:23-24

In our new section on Prophecy Central, called “False Signs and (Lying) Wonders,” we are starting to collect examples of some of these later-day deceptions. One of these is Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claim that the West is using technology to deliberately destroy Iran’s rain clouds.

One recent theory was that secret high-frequency weapons that affect the ionosphere were responsible for Hurricane Sandy.

See: False Signs and Wonders, Technology
CHAPTER 6

NATURAL DISASTERS, FAMINES AND PLAGUES

Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.” - Luke 21:10-11

Storms

This was not the worst year for earthquakes, tsunamis, storms, famines, and plagues, but there were some major disasters, such as our own super-storm Sandy. It was the largest on record, and the second most expensive (around $50 billion) after Hurricane Katrina. It devastated much of the East Coast, destroying beachfront homes and boardwalks from the Mid-Atlantic States to southern New England. At the height of the disaster, more than 8.2 million people lost electricity — some as far away as Michigan. Nearly a quarter of those without power were in New York.

The second most expensive natural disaster was also in the U.S. It was the summer-long drought in the Corn Belt that caused severe crop damage and $20 billion in losses.

The total cost of natural disasters in 2012 was $160 billion according to the world’s largest reinsurance firm, Munich Re. That total was still less than 2011 when the damage total was $400 billion due to major earthquakes in Japan and New Zealand and severe floods in Thailand.

On a personal note — we got stuck in Jordan because of a freak storm in the desert after our visit to Petra. They called it the “Storm of the Century.” An impending flash flood kept us from crossing the border point back into Israel. The Lord was with us and everything turned out all right.

See: Fearful Events

Earthquakes and Tsunamis

Jesus said that there would be earthquakes in various places in the end times (Matthew 24:7). There would evidently be enough seismic activity to capture our attention before the Tribulation, but the worst of it would be during the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:18-20).

There were only a few major earthquakes this year, but analysis by scientists indicated that the Japan quake from last year and the Sumatra quake this year caused some significant changes to our planet.

A report in March pointed out “7 Strange Ways the Japan Quake Shook the World.” Almost a year after the 2011 disaster in Japan, the study listed a number of ways that the earth was altered by the event. It was Japan's strongest earthquake, and it actually changed the pull of gravity in the region and affected the rotation of the planet. It noted, “The temblor accelerated earth's spin, shortening the length of the 24-hour day by 1.8 microseconds. A microsecond is a millionth of a second.”

In September another study released information about this year’s 8.7 magnitude quake in Sumatra, Indonesia on March 11. It was one of the strongest and strangest ever recorded. The 9.2 earthquake that struck the same island in 2004 caused a massive tsunami that resulted in
incredible damage and killed more than 227,000 people in 14 countries. This year's quake caused only a small tidal wave (12 inches high).

Studies have shown that this earthquake was not a "subduction" earthquake, where the edge of one tectonic plate slips beneath the edge of another plate. That sort of earthquake causes the ocean floor to drop, generating the large tsunami wave. Instead, this quake was a "strike-slip" earthquake — like the San Andreas Fault — where the two sides of the fault move horizontally, displacing the ground sideways.

The April 11 earthquake was unusual in two ways. First, it was the most powerful strike-slip quake ever recorded, and secondly, it was not on the edges of separate tectonic plates like the San Andreas. Instead, it occurred in the middle of one tectonic plate, and in the process it created a zig-zag pattern - racing along one fault at the speed of more than a mile per second, and then, when it intersected another fault, it ruptured that one too. The report said, “In all, it ruptured four different faults over the course of 150 seconds, unleashing an amount of energy equivalent to about four magnitude-8.0 earthquakes.”

Thorne Lay, a professor of earth and planetary sciences at the University of California, Santa Cruz, explained that the earthquake occurred in a region that is giving birth to the earth's newest tectonic plate.

There is growing evidence that some of our human activities can cause an increase in earthquakes. One case in point is the process of “fracking”- breaking up rock layers to allow oil and natural gas to seep through. In January the Ohio Department of Natural Resources suspended operations at a Youngstown Township fluid injection well after a 4.0 earthquake struck the area on New Year’s Eve. It was the 11th temblor in the area since March.

A new study released in September about an earthquake in Lorca, Spain last year indicates that the quake was caused by deep wells and waste disposal. The tremor then ruptured a fault running near a basin that had been weakened by 50 years of groundwater extraction in the area. Nine people were killed and nearly 300 were injured by the unusually shallow magnitude-5.1 quake.

Construction of dams has also been associated with increased earthquake activity. As we reported last year, there are over 90 identified sites in the world where earthquakes have been triggered by the filling of water reservoirs.

See Earthquakes

Famines and Pestilences

Famines are a perennial problem. They are often the direct result of two prominent end times predictions: wars and natural disasters. They can also be the result of corrupt or incapable politics. Famine is listed by Jesus as a sign of the times in the period leading up to the Tribulation (Matthew 24:7).

Nearly 21,000 people die of malnutrition every day, and most of them are children. On any given day, nearly a billion people do not have enough to eat.20

The number of people dying from famine in Somalia has dropped considerably this year, but major droughts in the world has driven food prices very high and is especially hurtful to people in the Middle East and Africa.

According to the Book of Revelation famine will be even worse during the Tribulation Period (Revelation 6:5-6).
Pestilences include wild animals, pests, diseases and environmental hazards. These things have been problems in every age, but in our times there are major concerns about new diseases like AIDS and drug-resistant strains of old diseases like tuberculosis. Radiation from space, radio, television and cellular signals, and nuclear accidents are adding to the growing problem of cancer, which affects most families today. Terrorism and threats of war pose the additional nightmare of injury or death by nuclear, biological or chemical weapons.

In October two interesting developments were reminders of this ever-changing threat. One of these was a decision by Italy’s Supreme Court that mobile phones can cause brain tumors. The other is a story about two confirmed deaths in the UK caused by different diseases that have "jumped" from the animal population to infect humans. One of these was a tick-borne disease that is widespread in domestic and wild animals in Africa and Asia. The other was SARS-like disease contracted in Afghanistan that had only previously been seen in bats.

During the Tribulation, the Book of Revelation predicts even greater world-wide disasters (Revelation 6:7-8).

We can expect the frequency and severity of these events that are beyond our control to gradually increase as we approach the end.-

See: Famines, Plagues
CHAPTER 7

SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS

In Luke 21:10-11 Jesus said that there would be fearful events and great signs in the heavens in the days leading to the end times. Changes in the Sun and unexpected sights in the skies might also call attention to these days. One possibility for the fulfillment of this prophecy would be the Mayan calendar scare. It was based on the position of the earth in relation to the rest of the Universe (See Chapter 5 – False Signs). Other fearful things from the heavens might include solar storms, UFOs, space debris, the threat of an EMP attack (see Chapter 3- Rumors of War), and man-made interference with the atmosphere.

Asteroids and Comets

At the end of this year we just received news that a previously unknown comet (Ison) will visit our skies next year, be visible much of the time, and be brighter than the Moon at some point. At least it is not on a collision course with our planet!

Actually, there will be a different comet visible earlier in the year. It is named Panstarrs, and it should be seen in March. In ancient times the appearance of a comet was considered by many as an evil omen. We, of course, do not see them that way, but they will draw our attention to the heavens and remind us that there are many incredible and sometimes dangerous objects up there.

The Book of Revelation speaks of a number of asteroids that will impact the earth during the Tribulation (Revelation 6:13; 8:10-12).

In May extensive new sky-mapping techniques were used to show that there are likely 4,700 potentially hazardous asteroids in orbit around the Sun. There are also approximately 1,500 space rocks that are larger than 330 feet wide. Their orbits occasionally bring them close enough to threaten the earth. Only about 30 percent of those objects have actually been found.

One known asteroid, named Toutatis, flew past the earth in December. It was about 4.3 million miles away from earth, which is about 18 times farther away than the moon.

Solar Storms

Sometime between now and the end of next year the Sun will reach its so-called Solar-Max, or peak of its 11-year cycle of activity. If a Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) happens to release its explosive power directly toward earth, the resulting electromagnetic fluctuations can cause failure of our power grids and satellites (including communications, GPS signals and aircraft navigation). It could take up to 10 years to repair the damage.

In March the Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope recorded a powerful solar flare. It caused the Sun to briefly become the brightest object in the gamma-ray sky. It produced high-energy gamma rays for about 20 hours, two and a half times longer than any event on record.

UFOs

Thousands of possible UFO sightings have been registered during this generation. Numerous movies have explored the possibility of alien life forms visiting or invading the earth. Somewhere between the extremes of wild speculation and blind denial, the evidence suggests
that there is something unexplained happening. This could be the major fulfillment of Jesus' prediction of "fearful sights." Fear of the unknown could be used by the "Man of Sin" in the end times to convince people to believe lies (2 Thessalonians 2). The greatest deception of that future time will undoubtedly be a false explanation about the millions of born-again Christians who will disappear at the Rapture, when Jesus returns for believers of the Church Age. UFO phenomena may be a demonic set-up for the lie that some New Age believers already teach - that when the coming "Age of Aquarius" is ushered in, alien spacecraft will remove the "troublemakers" from the earth.

This year we added a new UFO section to Prophecy Central. We have actually reported major stories about this topic for many years, but have decided to provide more information than we had previously done.

Going back just a couple of years, to September of 2010, there were two sensational stories reported by major news sources that brought UFOs and extraterrestrial life back into the public eye. The first was about a press conference in Washington D.C. UFO researcher Robert Hastings announced that some 100 former and retired members of the US Air Force claim sightings of UFOs and say that aliens interfered with nuclear weapons.

The second big story was that the United Nations was seriously considering appointing an “Ambassador to Extraterrestrials.” The most likely person to be appointed to such a position was named as Mazlan Othman, a Malaysian astrophysicist. News sources were asked to recast the story to include that Othman denied the appointment. However, she does already hold the position of director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

In May of this year Professor Paul Springer of the U.S. Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama was guest on an Australian talk show. He said that the U.S. military is making plans for the possibility of an alien invasion, and that his superiors had authorized him to discuss the matter. Michael Salla, founder of the Honolulu-based Exopolitics Institute commented on Springer’s statement, saying that it has been documented for more than 60 years that UFOs have been observing U.S. nuclear weapons facilities and, in some cases, have disrupted their launch capability.

In June a survey for National Geographic reveals that 36 percent of Americans believe that aliens have already visited earth, and 80 percent believe the government has hidden information on UFOs from the public.

A similar survey in October by Opinion Matters revealed that more than 33 million U.K. citizens believe in extraterrestrial life, but just over 27 million -- believe in God.

**Space Debris**

There are some 19,000 now-useless man-made objects larger than 5 cm floating around in orbit, and another 300,000 smaller fragments of rockets and satellites that have been launched from earth into space. Many of these objects are tracked, but the potential for critical collisions and uncontrolled re-entry is a growing problem.  

**Interference with the Atmosphere**

The Apostle Paul foretold the powers of the future "man of sin."

\[
\text{[Even him], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. - 2 Thessalonians 2:9}\]
Some secret technologies have been developed. They may be for peaceful and helpful purposes, but they have the potential of being used for evil, and for making people believe lies about what is actually happening. Here is a list of some of the things we are starting to notice and report:

- **Chemtrails** – Illegal spraying of harmful substances in the atmosphere
- **Cloud seeding** – To create rain and snow
- **H.A.A.R.P.** (High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program) – Able to change atmospheric conditions
- **Project Blue Beam** – Supposedly capable of projecting holographic images into the sky

See: [Fearful Events](#), [Signs in the Heavens](#), [UFOs](#), [False Signs and Wonders](#)
CHAPTER 8

PERSECUTION

Fallen humanity is naturally selfish and prejudiced, so racism and persecution of people who are different is a world-wide problem. However, these days it is especially focused against Christianity. Jesus said,

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. - Matthew 24:9

With more than 100 million (!!) persecuted Christians in the world, it is a growing problem, especially in Communist and Radical Islamic countries. They are being driven out of the Middle East in such numbers that some predict there will be no openly Christian believers there in the future. Even in the United States there is a noticeable rise in opposition to Christians, especially if they take a stand on the moral issues of the day.

Even before the 9/11 attacks, Harvard professor Samuel P. Huntington wrote the book, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. In it he predicted there would be a "clash of civilizations" between three great cultures (the Western, Asian, and Islamic). He predicted a massive conflict between the West and Islam caused by Islamic militarism.

In January Commentator Giulio Meotti says that history is moving toward a "Christians-free Middle East."

Leonard Leo, chairman of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, said U.S. troop withdrawal in Iraq could lead to the complete eradication of Christianity there.

In Egypt, 100,000 Christians already left the country after Hosni Mubarak’s fall. Attacks against Christians have increased greatly since then, and observers fear that the new control by the Muslim Brotherhood will cause an increase in this violence. A number of world leaders expressed serious concern about the dramatic upsurge in attacks against that nation's largest religious minority, the Coptic Orthodox Christian community.

Christians who support Bashar Assad’s regime in Syria will suffer the consequences when he falls.

Christians in the Palestinian areas are being driven out. Every year some 1,000 Palestinian Christians are leaving Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus.

Christians who were once popular in Lebanon are now being assassinated and their communities are being bombed.

By February the situation was worse. In Nigeria Boko Haram continued to kill Christians and burn down churches.

In Sudan intense persecution of Christians and Animists caused between 53,000 and 75,000 to be displaced from their residences.

In March Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Asheikh, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, reportedly said that it is "necessary to destroy all the churches." in the region.

In September, after more than 1,000 days in jail, Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, was released from jail. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) explained that he had been in jail since 2009, was acquitted of apostasy -- that is, converting from Islam to Christianity -- but found guilty of evangelizing Muslims. Nadarkhani said he never was a Muslim.

The tension between Christians and Muslims was made worse that month when two Coptic Christians who had emigrated from Egypt to Southern California were involved in the
production of a video called “Innocence of Muslims” that inflamed anger throughout the Middle East. An Egyptian military official said that Islamic groups threatened to slaughter “the whole Christian Coptic community” in the city of Naja Hamadi, located about 60 miles from Cairo.

In October The Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life issued a new report showing that even in the United States there has been an increase of restrictions on the practice of some people’s faith. Thus the United States was moved from a low category of restriction to a moderate category for the first time.

Christian civil rights organization ACLJ senior counsel David French said. “It’s clear that – particularly on college and university campuses – we have seen a significant rise in attempts to silence Christian organizations by the misapplication of nondiscrimination laws.”

In December a British think tank has released a lengthy report, entitled “Christianophobia.” It claimed that militant Islam is the greatest existential threat to Middle Eastern Christianity, bringing Christian communities in the region "close to extinction." It focused on the persecution of Christians in Burma, China, Egypt, India, Iraq, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

Right after the end of the year Open Doors, a Christian missionary organization, reported that there was a vast rise in Christian persecution in Africa last year as radical Islamists consolidated power there. Nigeria, Somalia, Ethiopia and Mali were especially bad for Christians.

North Korea topped Open Doors' list for the 11th year in a row...The group estimates that as many as 70,000 Christians are imprisoned in North Korea simply for being Christian, and the act of carrying a Bible can result in execution.

Other top violators were Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, with Syria rising rapidly.

On the other hand, China has improved, moving down on the persecution list from No. 21 in 2011 to No. 37 in 2012.

See: Persecution
CHAPTER 9

TECHNOLOGY AND THE MARK OF THE BEAST

“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” – Daniel 12:4

Daniel recorded many detailed predictions about the future that even he could not fully understand. Before our time, no one could have imagined the unbelievable increase of knowledge that has been brought about by the computer revolution. And the Internet has provided a way for many to "go here and there" to gain that information.

These and other technological advances have made it possible to share the Gospel globally. But they will also enable Satan to form a world-wide government and an economic dictatorship that will require the Mark of the Beast.

15 The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. 16 It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, 17 so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. 18 This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666. – Revelation 13:15-18

Information Technology (IT)

At the heart of this information age is the amazing history of computers, especially the last three and a half decades of the personal computer. The speed, memory and functionality of computers have grown exponentially, doubling approximately every year and a half during the past generation.

Personal computers were soon able to do all that mainframe computers had done before. But mainframe computers developed into supercomputers and kept the same incredible pace of faster and better performance. As time progressed, both the personal computers and the supercomputers became smaller and smaller! Then laptop computers and even tablets were able to do what the desktop computer used to do. And now, smartphones can do as much – in some cases more- than the laptop.

The Internet, an “information highway,” also grew to meet the needs of the computer industry, expanding from phone lines to fiber optic cables, satellites, and several generations of wireless communication.

During the year the supercomputer race had two new winners – both of them from U.S. companies. The previous two years Japan made the fastest one – Fujitsu’s “K.”

In June IBM took the lead again with its Sequoia computer at the Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. The Sequoia will be used for simulations on nuclear weapons. Its sustained speed is 16.32 petaflops - over 16 thousand trillion calculations per second. The description of this computer states:

“It can calculate in one hour what otherwise would take 6.7 billion people using hand calculators 320 years to complete if they worked non-stop, according to the BBC.”
Then, in November Cray Computer’s Titan was put into service at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. It is capable of operating at more than 20,000 trillion calculations each second (20 petaflops).

That is roughly equivalent to each of the world’s seven billion people being able to carry out three million calculations per second… Titan also has more than 700 terabytes of memory.

Just one such supercomputer would be more than enough for an economic dictator to keep tabs on the location, finances, and personal activities of every person on the planet. In other words, there is no mystery now how The Beast of Revelation 13 could administer his “Mark of the Beast” system.

On the other hand, he would not need a supercomputer to exercise such control. During the year it was estimated that Google uses about 2 million comparatively low-speed servers to give everyone on the Internet lightning-fast results for their searches. They divide the task between twelve server farms all over the planet, and each server farm has up to 200,000 servers! Facebook, Amazon, and other gigantic computer enterprises use similar processes.

**Internet**

The Internet is equally amazing. So far it has grown with the rest of technology, and experts think it will continue to handle the load far into the future, although they admit that they will need a new address system to make room for all the devices that people will want to connect.

It uses 425,000 global routes to deliver digital content to more than two billion people around the world. It adds some 500,000 new users a day. Here are some news items about the Internet from 2012.

In March, CIA Director David Petraeus said that new inexpensive technology will make it feasible to connect the Internet not only to computers, phones, and televisions, but to an endless variety of devices like cameras, doorbells, kitchen appliances, etc.

Petraeus says that web-connected gadgets will 'transform' the art of spying - allowing spies to monitor people automatically without planting bugs, breaking and entering or even donning a tuxedo to infiltrate a dinner party.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) held two weeks of discussions in December on how to control the Internet. The Wall Street Journal warned that many of the proposals being brought to the conference would threaten the smooth and open operation of the Internet. Many representatives would like to charge or tax the use of the Internet, and authoritarian governments would like to be able to control its content. The conference failed to get approval for a new communications treaty. Many of the representatives said they would need to consult with their governments first. The US, Canada, Australia and UK refused to sign it.

On Jan. 1, 2013 the Internet turned 30! It is hard to fathom what a difference it has made in such a short time. What a loss it will be to those who do not receive the Mark of the Beast when they are cut off from the Internet! Will a Christian underground find another way to supply information to believers?

**Identification**

A constantly increasing amount of our vital private information is being stored and used by this amazing new cybernetic world. This raises issues of security and privacy for all of us.
The number of passwords one must know to access all of this information is frustrating. Identity thieves steal credit card numbers, log-on information, and other personal data. The major challenge now is to positively and effortlessly identify ourselves to all our on-line accounts in a way that cannot be duplicated by criminals.

One way to do this is to have one or more biometric signatures that accompany our identification names or numbers. Here are some of these biometric methods:

- Facial recognition
- Digital Fingerprinting
- Iris Recognition
- Vein Reading Technology
- Hand Geometry
- Ear Shape
- Gait Analysis (Walking Patterns)

In August a "Biometrics & Identity Management Summit" was held at the Ritz-Carlton in Pentagon City Arlington, Virginia. It was the only conference of its kind in the world. Six official US Government agencies were involved in the conference: US-VISIT, BIMA, DARPA, FBI, NIJ, and JIEDDO COIC. Participants reviewed the past history of biometric identification, and the continued developments of newer technologies.

Another way a person can provide a positive identification is by implanting a Radio Frequency ID (RFID) microchip under one's skin. The device is about the size of a grain of rice. It was called VeriChip, but it now has a new name: “PositiveID.” It works with the VeriMed System, which connects directly to the Healthlink global network via the Internet, allowing doctors immediate retrieval of everything they need to know about the person who has the chip.

In addition, there are serious proposals to use the same technology for protection of our children, financial transactions and security, tracking the nearly 50% of Americans who receive food stamps or other government assistance, identifying criminals, gun owners, special medical conditions, etc.

The author of this article adds that the government could easily require all good citizens to have this device. Those who refuse could be considered terrorists because, "If you’re not chipped, you’re probably hiding something and are obviously dangerous."

In September it was revealed that the Unique Identity Authority of India (UIDAI) had already collected digital data from 200 million Indians, including digital fingerprints, iris scans, facial photographs, names, addresses and birthdates. Participants are given a 12-digit unique ID number and an ID card linked to the data. Their goal is to include every one of India's 1.2 billion residents.

This registration in India is the basis for new mobile apps that will facilitate everything from banking transactions to the purchase of goods and services.

Those who do not join the program will miss out on these conveniences.

In November a WND article stated that The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), together with Carnegie-Mellon University and some 14 other research organizations are developing “an artificial intelligence (AI) system called “Mind’s Eye,” that can watch and predict what a person is likely to do in the future.”

For example, if a person in an airport sets down a bag and does not stay with it could alert authorities.
The program uses software called PetaVision, which employs facial recognition, body shape, color, texture, and how they move to identify people. The system employs an IBM “roadrunner” supercomputer.

In December Andrea Hernandez, a sophomore in a Texas High School refused to wear a RFID tracking badge that her school requires. Andrea and her father, Steven Hernandez, said that they believed the electronic system was a sign of the Antichrist described in the New Testament book of Revelation. The courts ruled against the teen’s complaint, saying that the choice was secular, not religious. The case is likely to be appealed.

**Individualization/ Smart Phone**

The latest smart phones were all the rage at this year’s gigantic CES conference in Las Vegas. Samsung’s Galaxy led the way, along with Apple’s iPhone, Google’s Nexus and Nokia’s Lumina.

According to an International Data Corporation report, more than three times as many smartphones were shipped than PCs in the 3rd quarter of the year. In the 4th quarter sales were expected to reach 224.5 million units - almost 40% higher than the same period last year.

These phones have powerful processors, high resolution displays, front and rear cameras, Internet connectivity, Near Field Communications (NFC) for “pay with your phone” transactions and data transfer to other smartphones, memory storage in “the cloud,” voice recognition, GPS functionality for mapping, navigation, and even knowing where family members are. They enable common office document processing, storage, and printing. Some include a gyroscope, compass and accelerometer, and the capability of connecting to game consoles.

More than a million helpful applications are available. Most are free or relatively inexpensive. Free card readers enable small businesses to turn their smart phones into sales kiosks.

Our dependence on these smart phones will require greater safeguards. Once the smart phone has all our personal data and becomes our indispensable commerce device, and maybe even has a large amount of money stored electronically, what will happen if we lose it? Would someone else be able to take over our finances and have access to all our secret information?

Losing one's phone would be worse than losing one's wallet or one's car.

The solution will be to make the phone useless to anyone but its rightful owner. This could be done with a tiny device implanted in the owner. Thus the smart phone would not work unless it was near its authorized user. Meanwhile, the phone could be located by its built-in GPS device. And what criminal would want to take the phone if he couldn't use it, and it leads the police to his door?

Here are a couple of interesting developments about this subject:

In May an article in The Daily Reckoning said that the near field communications (NFC), feature of smart phones will eventually replace most credit cards. This technology enables rapid point-of-sale payment directly from one's phone to the vendor. The system is in use already and growing in popularity. They said that in Africa, Asia and Latin America, money is often stored in a mobile account and transferred to another one during a purchase by bringing the buyer’s and seller’s cell phones into close proximity. This could mean that the phone will eventually replace the need for cash, checks or credit cards.

This January a shocking commercial for Verizon’s Droid 'DNA' shows a man being implanted with various smartphone parts to merge his body and his phone. The tagline for the commercial was, “It’s not an upgrade to your phone, it’s an upgrade to yourself…” So far, it is
not clear whether or not any actual human implants exist. If they do have some in mind it will take time for them to be tested and approved.

For some time we have been saying that an implanted chip will probably also be a part of the ultimate technology for the mark. The phone would be linked to the implant so that if it were lost or stolen it would not work, and its valuable information could not be copied apart from its rightful owner. Those who don’t already have an implant might be compelled to receive one as part of the “Mark of the Beast.” Those who fail to accept it could simply be denied use of the Internet, causing a loss of all ability to use their smart phones to buy and sell, and carry on the necessary communications of life.

See: Technology, Mark of the Beast, Image of the Beast
LACK OF INTEREST IN BIBLE PROPHECY

Bible prophecy is full of mysterious things: the four horsemen of the apocalypse, a seven-headed dragon, a lamb that speaks like a dragon, stars falling from the heavens, and many more. We have studied these mysteries for most of our lives. But there is a new puzzle that has gradually captured our attention in recent years. It is the question of how the Church of the end times could be lured into complacency just at the time that these prophecies all begin to materialize right before our eyes.

Many New Testament passages predict a time of apostasy, or “falling away” of the Church. We will consider this more in the next chapter. According to Matthew 24:12, most Christians will grow spiritually cold during this time. 2 Timothy 4:3 predicts that people will reject sound teaching and choose teachers who will say what they want to hear.

We are now living in a period of time where every day’s news brings fresh fulfillments of the striking prophecies of the Bible. Amazingly, many people do not seem to give the matter much thought. Hal Lindsey’s book, “The Late Great Planet earth,” was the best-selling non-fiction prophecy book, and the “Left Behind” series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins was the best-selling fiction series in American history. Still, today’s average Christian is not living in anticipation that Jesus’ return is near.

How there could be a lack of interest in prophecy at a time like this? We have begun to think about it as “The Prophecy Pendulum.” As we all know, the pendulum of a clock is always swinging. It is sometimes in the middle, but just as often, it is at the far left of its swing or on the far right.

On one side of this swinging pendulum there are major events that capture everyone’s attention, such as the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948, or the dangerous Middle East wars that threaten to escalate into a world-wide conflict. On the other side, there are promises of peace, or periods of relative prosperity. Whenever it is possible, Satan will convince people not to think about the end times. He knows that when people are focused on the “blessed hope,” they will not be inclined to follow him. The Apostle Peter said that knowledge about God’s future plans would cause us to live a more godly life (2 Peter 3:11-12).

In this chapter we want to encourage pastors to experience the joy of teaching prophecy. When Paul was about to leave the city of Ephesus he said to the Elders of the church there,

For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. – Acts 20:27

Prophecy is a major part of the Bible, comprising more than a quarter of its writings. Much of this prophecy has already been fulfilled in a variety of ways, including the coming of Christ into the world to seek and to save the lost. Fulfilled prophecy is the most convincing proof that the Bible really is God’s Word. From a scientific perspective, it would have been virtually impossible for the numerous prophecies about the first coming of Christ to have been fulfilled by coincidence. Any honest inquirer would be impressed by these fulfillments. Such claims could not be made about any other holy book.

Logic dictates that the prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled must be of equal importance and should be fulfilled just as literally as the earlier ones were. Any pastor who wants to teach “the whole counsel of God” will need to tackle this topic.
Here are some of the obstacles that a godly pastor faces when he approaches this subject, and some suggestions about how to handle it.

**Not Prepared**

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*

*Because you have rejected knowledge,*

*I also will reject you from being priest for Me;* - Hosea 4:6

Many seminaries do not teach prophecy. Once the pastor is on the field, he may not know where to begin. He is so busy. And he may not know who to trust about the subject. But the people of the church need to know. After all, it’s not a minor issue. We offer some suggestions in the last chapter about learning and teaching the subject.

**Avoiding Controversies**

*Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

— 2 Timothy 4:2-4

Pastors and Bible teachers may be intimidated by the demands of their audiences. Some Megachurches make it a point not to teach anything controversial – from politics to moral issues, for fear that they will offend some of the “seekers” they are trying to reach. Pastors of smaller churches may feel that they must “compete” with these massive congregations by not offending anyone.

Satan uses fear to convince people to ignore information about an uncertain future. There is always something wonderful coming up: a wedding, the birth of a child, or maybe a trip to Hawaii. If the Lord does come back, they hope that it won’t be before their next “big event.” They discover that the best way to avoid hearing bad news would be to go to a church where the pastor never teaches prophecy.

**Prophecy Burn-out**

*Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,* 4 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 creation.”* – 2 Peter 3:3-4

There have been cycles of enthusiasm about prophecy, and especially about the soon coming of Jesus. At certain times, like the years right after Israel became a nation, during the Jesus People revival, or even periods of war in the Middle East, interest in prophecy peaked, and Christians believed that the Rapture of the church was imminent. Of course, most teachers avoided setting dates, since Jesus warned against this (Matthew 24:36).

When Christ did not return, after years, or even decades, of anticipation many people begin to doubt that these are the end times. For some of them their initial enthusiasm was like an inoculation against getting excited about prophecy later in life.
Even in the First Century Peter said people wanted to know, “Where is the promise of His coming?” He answered them this way:

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. – 1 Peter 3:8-9

Another big turn-off for people in our generation is the reaction to irresponsible prophecy teachers who set dates for Christ’s return, name Antichrist, or propose ridiculous interpretations, and are discredited when their ideas don’t pan out. It seems anyone can come up with wild notions about the future – after all, it hasn’t happened yet, so who can say it is false? And there are always some gullible people who believe these false teachers – sometimes, even after they have been proven to be wrong.

Author Joel Rosenberg answers this objection. He notes that there are some who have false teaching about the Gospels and the Epistles too. He says,

But a good pastor wouldn’t dare skip teaching correctly these books of the Bible. On what basis, then, do we have the right to avoid teaching whole books of the Bible — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, among others — just because some charlatans are out their misleading people? Indeed, we should be teaching solidly on prophecy all the more because of the nuts who are out there.

Wrong Interpretations of Bible Prophecy

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. – 2 Timothy 2:15

It is unwise to be dogmatic about most of the details of prophecy. The Bible tells us a great deal about the future, but it is wise not to limit the possible ways that the prophecies might unfold. For example, many people were expecting the coming of Messiah in the days that Jesus appeared, but no one could have accurately predicted all of the details of His unique birth, ministry and death.

We will look at some of the major prophetic issues about which all true Christians should agree. Then we will discuss some mistakes and false teaching about the subject that should be avoided and rejected.

- **Vital truths about prophecy that all true Christians should believe:**
  1. **The Inspiration of Scripture, including the Prophecies**

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. – 2 Peter 1:19-21

2. **The Second Coming of Christ**
Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” – Acts 1:9-11

Jesus Christ is returning to the earth again! He is coming first to meet the believers of the Church Age in the air. This is known as the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Later He will make a glorious appearance as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with the saints following Him. (Revelation 19:11-16). Some Bible students don’t see a distinction between the two events. But in any case, all Bible-believing Christians agree that Jesus is coming again. Twenty of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament mention this vital fact.

Even the Apostle’s Creed affirmed the Second Coming as an indispensable tenant of Christianity.

3 - God’s Distinct Plans for both Israel and the Church

Those who do not distinguish between Israel and the Church cannot understand prophecy.

The Abrahamic Covenant was the promise of a special blessing for Abraham's descendants: a "chosen" people. But it is obviously not for their benefit alone, but that, through them, all people would be blessed!

“I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” - Genesis 12:3

That “blessing for all peoples” was later revealed as Jesus the Messiah - the Deliverer from the penalty of sin. In Genesis 17 this promise, and others that would proceed from it, were called “everlasting” covenants.

Unfortunately, when Jesus did come as Messiah to Israel the majority of the people failed to recognize Him. In Romans 11 the Apostle Paul explained that they had become spiritually blind for a season. There were many who did believe in Jesus even then, and many thousands of Jews from all over the world have become believers in Jesus over the past 2000 years.

Meanwhile the "mystery" of the Church was revealed to the Apostle Paul, and described by him in numerous passages of Scripture. In Romans 11:25 he used the word to describe the temporary "hardening" of Israel: "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in."

The word "mystery" (Greek musterion) meant a "secret," or something formerly hidden, but now revealed.

Paul taught that it was a mystery that all things will eventually be brought together under the headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10).

In Ephesians 3 the Apostle explained in greater detail that the mystery of the Church was part of God's purpose all along to make Gentiles heirs together with Israel. Again in Ephesians, Paul calls the revelation that the Church is The Bride of Christ a mystery (Ephesians 5:32). And
he refers to his commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles as a mystery (Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 1:25-27).

Jews who believe in Jesus have become part of the Church. (See Ephesians 2:11-3:12 for God's purposes in this present age.)

In our generation a most amazing thing has happened. In fulfillment of Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37, Israel has become a nation again! In the new nation there is a small remnant of some thousands of believing Jews now resident in the Land of Israel (Romans 11:5). Yet for the most part Israel is a secular state.

Israel is still God’s Chosen People and has a definite role in the end times. After the Church Age is completed (at the Rapture), God will focus his activities once again on Jerusalem and His Chosen People (The Tribulation).

In his great discourse on Israel's future the Apostle Paul assures us,

> I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited:
> Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

> And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:
> "The deliverer will come from Zion;
> he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.
> And this is my covenant with them
> when I take away their sins." — Romans 11:25-27

4 – Minor differences in eschatology should not be a test of faith or fellowship

Christians may disagree with each other about the details of such as the timing of the Rapture, the identity of end times players, and methods of interpretation, but still agree about the basic truths of orthodox Christianity. It is generally not warranted to label someone who disagrees about eschatology as a heretic. “Heresy” in the Greek basically means “a choice”, and therefore it refers to division among believers. From that point of view a heretic is a person who causes division in the church.

We do want to identify some current interpretations that are weak or harmful, and some that are contrary to basic Bible teaching.

- Prophetic Interpretations that are Weak

Some who teach these things are godly, well-meaning, and scholarly, but for various reasons, their focus is on other parts of the Scripture and they tend to explain away prophecies that must still come to pass.

Preterism – This is the teaching that many prophecies, especially those in the Book of Revelation were fulfilled during the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and/or the persecutions of the Roman Empire. The name comes from the Latin word praeteritus, meaning “past.”

Most adherents to this belief are “partial” preterists because they still expect the literal return of Christ and judgment of the dead.

“Full” preterists believe that that all of Revelation has been fulfilled. They believe the return of Christ and the rest of the book are allegorical.

This view was originated by Roman Catholic writers and later adopted by some Protestants. It is incompatible with a literal approach to Bible study. Their explanations about how the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled are not at all convincing the way the Old Testament prophecies were in the life of Christ.
Islamic Antichrist – This is the belief that the current Islamic uprising will result in a new oppressive caliphate, and it will be successful enough to become the final worldly empire described in various ways in the Book of Daniel. This would make it the Antichrist’s empire, and whoever controls it will be a Muslim.

This view is not totally out of the question, and it is being advocated by some very sincere teachers, but it leaves some important issues unanswered. The first of these is why would Daniel’s prophecies (Daniel 2; Daniel 7) skip over the Roman empire, which Bible scholars have shown, was the logical historical empire in history after Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece?

Another problem in this view is the scope of the final battle. It is seen as a regional war instead of a coalition of all nations.

It is true that protests and revolutions in various Islamic countries around the Mediterranean Sea since 2011 raise the specter of a new Islamic caliphate. Perhaps this coalition could merge with European countries. Muslim culture is already becoming very prominent in Europe. Such a coalition would resemble the old Roman Empire at its greatest extent, and Muslim element could be the clay in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of a final evil empire (Daniel 2:31-45), symbolized by iron [Rome] and clay [Islam?].

- Dangerous Concepts of Prophecy

Dominion Theology – A large segment of the evangelical church believes that, God gave dominion over the earth to Adam, that Adam lost it to Satan, that Jesus defeated Satan and took dominion back, then gave it to the Church. They believe Jesus established His Kingdom while he was here but it has yet to reach its full glory. Once the Church has established control over the earth’s governments and social institutions Christ will return to reign (This is known as Postmillennialism ).

There are two main elements of Dominion Theology: the “Christian Reconstruction” Calvinists and the “Kingdom Now” Charismatics.28 Other names associated with the movement are “New Apostolic Reformation,” “Reconstructionism,” and “Theonomy.”

The problem with this view is that the Bible does not teach that we will establish the Kingdom. Jesus will establish the Kingdom on earth when He returns as King of Kings. The Kingdom does exist now in Heaven where King Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. Since it is not yet established on earth we are taught to pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36). Born-again Christians are citizens of the Kingdom of God (Philippians 3:20), and ambassadors to the earth (2 Corinthians 5:20), where we hold secondary citizenship (Matthew 22:17-22). We will consider this more in the last chapter on End Times Revival.

Replacement Theology – This is view that the Church has replaced Israel permanently in the plan of God. They think the promises and prophecies about Israel have been transferred to the Church. This is the belief of most theologically liberal main-line protestant denominations and the Catholic Church. Some 100 million American Christians attend churches that subscribe to this viewpoint.29 Consequently, they hear little or nothing about prophecy in their churches.
This teaching is usually associated with an amillennial view of eschatology. They do not expect a literal thousand-year reign of Christ in the future, nor do they expect God to re-gather and bless Israel in the future. Thus Revelation 20 is taken symbolically, not literally, by adherents of this view. In most cases, the laity are not taught this. The subject of prophecy is just ignored.

This belief is wrong and dangerous. A literal interpretation of Scripture requires belief in an actual thousand year period of time during which Christ will reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The book of Revelation describes these periods of time clearly: The Church Age (chapters 1-3), The Tribulation (chapters 4-19), The Millennium (chapter 20), and then The New Heaven and earth (chapters 21-22).

See: Second Coming, Rapture, Israel, Systematic Prophecy part 1, 2, & 3
CHAPTER 11

APOTASY

In these last two chapters we focus on two opposite but inter-related aspects of the end times: Apostasy and Revival.

12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.
— Matthew 24:12-14

Apostasy means “falling away.” It comes from the Greek apostasis, meaning “revolt.” The word has come to mean defection from one’s religion or morality. Unfortunately this is happening in our age. Too many Christians have departed from the lofty ideals and morality of our forefathers. This situation was predicted in the Book of Revelation for the last period of the Church Age:

14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:
These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.
19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.
21 To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” — Revelation 3:14-22

While Christianity is growing in the world at large (see next chapter), American Christianity is in trouble. Many aspects of Christian faith and practice are in decline. This can be seen in the churches, where overall attendance is declining; in homes, where the divorce rate for Christians is roughly the same as for non-Christians; in sports and entertainment, where the heroes are too-often immoral; in politics, where God is purposely removed from some party platforms; and in business, where the Christian work-ethic is becoming rare.

In July a Gallup Poll discovered that Americans’ confidence in organized religion is lower than ever before. Only 44 percent of respondents registered strong confidence in religion. Protestants were the most trusting group at 56%, Catholics were at 46%, and Non-Catholic and non-Protestant expressed only 29% confidence.

In October, another study from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life revealed that one of five Americans is now “unaffiliated” with any church or organized faith. And one third under age 30 report themselves as unaffiliated. In that age group the number of unaffiliated has
risen from about 15% to 20% in the past 5 years. They say they are comfortable with no affiliation and are not looking for a church. The new name for this group is “Nones.”

See: Apostasy

Homosexuality and Same-sex Marriage

The Apostle Paul’s strong language about homosexuality in Romans 1:24-27 is one of nine in the Bible that make it perfectly clear that this practice is a sin. These passages are found in eight different books of the Bible.

Of course, the greater message of the Bible is God’s love for sinners. All of us have sinned, and homosexuality is just one item in the very long list of things that break God’s laws. The difference is that, while people generally agree with God about all the others, many have decided that this one thing should not be considered sinful, but natural.

Too many churches have ignored God’s Word on this subject. Thankfully, there are still many who value God’s Word and the outcome of this spiritual battle is not yet settled. In the next chapter we will look at possibilities for the faithful church of our time. In Revelation they were called the Church in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13). This was the missionary church of the first Century and it prefigured the missionary and evangelical church of our time.

In February a federal appeals panel in San Francisco ruled that California’s Proposition 8, which defined a marriage as only between one man and one woman, is unconstitutional. The matter has been appealed to the Supreme Court, and in December the high court announced that they would consider the issue in 2013.

In May, at a fundraiser hosted by the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Leadership Council, President Obama went beyond his past statement that same-sex couples should have the right to marry. He spoke in favor of repealing the Defense of Marriage Act which was passed in 1996.

In July The U.S. Episcopal Church became the biggest US church to bless same-sex unions. They approved a liturgy called "The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant." In the proposed rite, each person would make a vow to the other, exchange rings and be declared "bound to one another in a holy covenant, as long as they both shall live."

Other churches have made similar decisions. The United Church of Christ voted in 2005 to support full civil and religious marriage equality for same-sex couples. The U.S. Presbyterian Church already allows ministers to bless gay unions but prohibits them from solemnizing gay civil marriages.

In August, even though homosexuals represent maybe 3 percent of the population, the Democratic National Committee added support of gay marriage to the party platform. They equated denying same-sex marriage to the older civil rights issue of denying interracial marriage. Meanwhile, the Coalition of African-American Pastors (CAAP) criticized President Obama's support of same-sex marriage. Rev. William Owens, president of the organization, said "The man holding the most powerful position in the world is stooping to lead the country down an immoral path."

There was some good news. In July Chick-fil-A president Dan Cathy said that their company backed "the biblical definition of a family." Because of this a nation-wide boycott of the fast food chain was planned. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, a Baptist minister and former Presidential candidate, declared Wednesday, August 1 national "Chick-fil-A Appreciation
Day." Pro traditional family supporters turned out in droves to support the company. Huckabee said the success of the appreciation day went beyond anything he could have imagined and stores across the country reported "record, historic sales."

In October the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional, but in December the Supreme Court said that it would also take the appeal of that decision under consideration. Arguments for the cases will probably be heard in March, 2013, but decisions will be announced in late June.

Nine states have decided to allow same-sex marriage. They are: Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont, and Washington. The District of Columbia has also made that decision. On the other hand, 31 states have amended their constitutions to prohibit same-sex marriage.

In December the State of California approved a new law that prohibits "gay conversion therapy." The law was challenged by the case of a student and two mental health providers. A U.S. District Judge issued an injunction against enforcing the law. He said that they "are likely to succeed on the merits of their … claims based on violations of their rights to freedom of speech under the First Amendment." He also said that without the injunction they would be likely to suffer irreparable harm.

While we agree that Christians should approach those who practice homosexuality with love and compassion, it is still a sin, and the Bible makes this abundantly clear. Our concern for those who practice this lifestyle, as in the case of all other sins, should be for their salvation and deliverance from that lifestyle.

See: Homosexuality

Abortion

More than 54 million abortions have taken place since the landmark decision of Roe v. Wade in 1973. On average, more than 2000 per day were performed in 2012.

The main national news about abortion this year was related to a provision of the new “Obamacare” Affordable Care Act that forces taxpayers to fund abortions, even if it violates their conscience.

In June the Supreme Court allowed the controversial health care law to stand. Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List, said that the court's decision was "incredibly disappointing." She said that it offends the conscience of taxpayers because it makes them complicit in the deaths of countless unborn children.

On December 26, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor refused judicial relief to the Hobby Lobby craft store chain regarding their objection to the health care law because it requires them to provide birth control methods that may result in abortion.

A statement from Hobby Lobby says, "The company will continue to provide health insurance to all qualified employees. To remain true to their faith, it is not their intention, as a company, to pay for abortion-inducing drugs." Contraception is not the issue, but some of the government-approved methods will stop the growth of a fertilized egg.

As a result the government could fine Hobby Lobby $1.3 million per day! That would be the "death knell" for the company. Apparently, that death would be more desirable to the company's owners than potentially funding the deaths of developing human beings.

December 26 happens to be Stephen's Day, the day that honors Christendom's first martyr.
Violent Self-centeredness

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 
2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! – 2 Timothy 3:1-5

On Dec. 15 the nation and even the whole world was stunned by the massacre of 26 people - including 20 kindergarten children - at the Sandy Hook Elementary school in Connecticut. As the story unfolded, the perpetrator was a troubled young man whose mother was an aide in the school. He killed her before going to the school with guns registered to her. The case is still under investigation, but raises the question again about why so many young men are committing such atrocities.

Today’s young people are not intrinsically worse than previous generations, but they are the ones who have inherited an extremely troubled world, and understandably do not have much faith in a peaceful and prosperous future. Their temptations to addictive substances and immoral activities are intense. We have allowed God and prayer to be taken out of their education, and have handed them a world-view that denies absolute truth. Most of them do not know the Bible or have a personal relationship with Christ. They are the victims of the apostasy of our end times generation.

Though he was inspired to write these prophetic words, the Apostle Paul could not have imagined the effect that the violent media of this age, including some of the music, many of the movies, and most of the video games would have in searing the conscience of its young victims.

Other signs of Apostasy

We acknowledge that there are many other ways that the apostasy of our time manifests itself. The list is almost endless, and we do not try to track all of these. But some of the obvious issues are substance abuse, gambling, unfaithfulness and divorce, pornography, sexual trafficking, and sex and violence in movies television, and the Internet. If the Church would shine a brighter light on these evils, they could be reduced. We are often also guilty of a lack of care for the poor and needy. Above all else, we are not as concerned as we should be about bringing people to Christ.

It is a disturbing picture, but thankfully, there is good news too! None of this takes God by surprise, and none of it upsets His plans for the future. We have reason to hope for a great revival in these days. Read on…
CHAPTER 12

END TIMES REVIVAL

Our greatest hope in these difficult times is that Christians in America will experience repentance and that the Lord will send us a refreshing end times revival! As we saw at the beginning of the previous chapter there will be a great apostasy, but there will also be a call to repentance and revival!

The apostate Laodicean Church is not the only one that is active during the end times. The other church that is still a formidable force is the Church at Philadelphia.

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:’ 8 “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 Behold. I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. 13 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”’ – Revelation 3:7-13

This is a picture of the Missionary church. It began in the mid 1700’s with the great revivals and the modern missions movement, and it is still a major force in the world today, co-existing with the apostate Laodicean church.

Philadelphia means “brotherly love.” Love is the motivation for evangelism (Romans 5:5). Jesus is seen as having the keys of David. He was of the line of David, and thus eligible for the throne of Israel. With that key He opened amazing doors of opportunity for missions. It was a time of expanding the reach of His kingdom message.

The positive opportunities of this time in history are twofold: The spreading of the message of the Kingdom and the likelihood of a great end times revival.

Kingdom Work

During this trying time Jesus is incredibly active, using us to win converts to His Kingdom until He returns as King over all (Revelation 11:15-17; 19:11-16).

Jesus had told his Disciples that the kingdom was “at hand.” (Matthew 4:17). He knew his offer to be King at His triumphal entry would be rejected. Nevertheless, He will come in the
future (Luke 21:25-31; 22:18, 30). In Acts 1:6 they asked Him, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He told them they couldn’t know the time, but when the Holy Spirit would come, He would enable them to be witnesses to the whole earth.

Evidently the Kingdom would not yet be established at that time. He would not yet reign on earth, and the Disciples would not yet reign with Him, but they would spread the message of the Kingdom, even as He had been doing.

That is why Jesus taught us to pray “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as [it is] in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10). We still pray that way because even though His Kingdom does already exist in Heaven, and He is our King already, it still has not yet been established here on earth.

Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36-37).

Born-again Christians are citizens of the Kingdom of God.

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, - Philippians 3:20*

We are also citizens of our earthly nations.

17 Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"
18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?
19 Show Me the tax money."

So they brought Him a denarius.

20 And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?”
21 They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”

And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” 22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way. – Matthew 22:17-22

While we are here we are ambassadors, representing Christ and His Kingdom.

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. – 2 Corinthians 5:20*

During this time, we establish outposts of the Kingdom in our homes, churches, missions, and other Christian enterprises. We seek constantly to gain new members of the Kingdom by following His example of ministering to their needs and giving them the Gospel.

Many “New Evangelicals” in their emphasis on meeting the needs of the poor and needy have steered away from concern about prophecy. They correctly notice that some who are expecting the Lord’s imminent return have such a pessimistic view that things will just get “worse and worse,” that they neglect the other biblical instruction about environmental responsibility and humanitarian assistance.

However, the conflict between good works and prophecy is not an “either/or” question, but it requires a “both/and” solution. We should be aware that these are the end times, but because of that we should be occupied with Kingdom work now. He taught this directly in the parable about using what has been given to us while we are waiting for the Kingdom to be established. He said, “Do business [KJV- “occupy”] till I come.” (Luke 19:13, Luke 19:8-26)
As always, it requires the balanced approach that involves teaching the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

End Times Revival

The Bible tells us that God does not want any to perish (2 Peter 3:9). For that reason, He always gave opportunity to sinners to repent before allowing judgment to fall on their city or nation. If He could have found 10 righteous He would have spared Sodom (Genesis 18:23-33). In the case of Nineveh (Book of Jonah), there was a great revival when the people realized that they deserved judgment.

If the Lord sends us the revival that we so desperately need and desire, young people will probably lead the way, or at least, be a vital part of such a wonderful event. There are already many promising movements that could lead to a full-grown “Great Awakening” and hundreds of thousands of young people who are faithful disciples of The Lord Jesus Christ.

Here are some encouraging signs of revival.

Growth of World Christianity/ Missions

Christianity is by far the largest religion in the world, with 2.2 billion adherents, and has a good growth rate of 1.38%. Islam is second with 1.3 billion adherents and a slightly higher growth rate of 1.84%.  

There is extraordinary progress in Christian missionary activity today, but there are many changes in the way it is done. Fewer people are sent out as “missionaries” per se. Instead, Christians with valuable knowledge and skills go to far-away places to work in their chosen fields and do what they can to win people to Christ. Many of them are assisting the indigenous Christian leaders who are the primary agents of church-planting all over the world today.

In most Muslim countries it is illegal or very difficult to do evangelism and illegal for citizens to convert to Christianity. Amazingly, there are hundreds of stories now being told of Muslims who have had dreams or visions of Jesus. The Bible is full of dreams and visions of great prophetic importance. The Apostle Paul had a vision of Jesus on the Damascus Road, and was instantly converted. We expect more divine intervention to bring Muslims to Christ.

Another exciting example of church growth in the world of missions is the new ministry of Multiplication Networks, an organization that mobilizes local Christians in various countries to literally plant hundreds of new churches.

Seeds planted by pioneer missionaries to China in the 1800’s and early growth of Christians there seemed to have been destroyed by the Communist Revolution, but the believers there, driven underground and persecuted to the present time have grown to some 100 million dedicated and fearless missions-minded Christians! It is believed that the underground Chinese church hopes to mobilize a “Back to Jerusalem” evangelization campaign to reach fifty-one non-Christian countries with the Gospel. Their vision is to send a minimum of 100,000 missionaries along the Silk Road from China to the Mediterranean Sea.

Here are a few news snippets from the year’s activity in the world of missions:

In March the watchdog group Open Doors USA reported that the persecution of Christians has led to a booming underground church in Iran and young people in that country are unhappy with their Islamic leaders after what they consider a false re-election of their radical president. They said the number of Muslims converting to Christianity is growing at an explosive rate.
Also in March, Jerry Trousdale director of International Ministries for City Team International, reports that a new disciple-making strategy has enabled them to take the Gospel to 45 different "unreached" Muslim-majority groups in Africa in the past seven years. Over 6,000 new churches were planted among Muslims in 18 different countries in Africa and hundreds of former sheikhs and imams have become followers of Jesus Christ over that period. Trousdale is the author of the new book Miraculous Movements.

In July the Associated Press reported that at least 1 million evangelical Christians participated in the annual "March for Jesus" in Sao Paulo, Brazil. They quoted Police Capt. Luis Fernando Otaviano saying "The number of people participating is extremely high – at least 1 million." The event was organized by the Reborn in Christ Church. The evangelical population in Brazil has jumped 6.6 percent to 22.2 percent of the overall Brazilian population. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life now rates Brazil as the world's second most Christian-populated country.

In October Unfinished Magazine reminded us that an American Christian does not need to travel to a foreign land to be a missionary these days. Our neighbors and foreign students at near-by universities can be reached by the Gospel. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that there are nearly 40 million foreign-born people – or 13 percent of the total population – living in the United States as of July 2010. The article encouraged Christians to spend more time "going to" these people and spend less time trying to get them to "come to" church events.

In December Some 16,000 Christian young people came together in St. Louis for Urbana 2012, a triennial student missions conference hosted by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Students were inspired to go on short-term missions and commit their whole lives to mission.

**Calls for Revival**

_The Harbinger, a bestseller by Jonathan Cahn_, a Messianic Rabbi, sounded the alarm about apostasy in America, and how the attack on 9/11 should be a wake-up call. The central passage of Scripture for this fiction story is Isaiah 9:10 (noticed by many because it was just before “9/11”). It says:

> "The bricks have fallen down, But we will rebuild with hewn stones; The sycamores are cut down, But we will replace [them] with cedars.” "The bricks have fallen down, But we will rebuild with hewn stones; The sycamores are cut down, But we will replace [them] with cedars.”

The context of the verse shows that this was a prideful response by Israel instead of the national revival that they needed. The United States appears to be making the same mistake. It should not be taken as direct prophecy about the United States but this warning to Israel ought to serve as a warning to others who would ignore God’s correction.

Rabbi Cahn was asked to address the Presidential Inaugural Prayer Breakfast in Washington DC on Inauguration Day. He warned the gathering that the U.S. has chosen a path that takes the nation away from God, and he pleaded with its leaders to return. He said there was "an explosion of prayer and worship" after his message, and that he is praying it will be the beginning of an awakening.

Chuck Smith, "The father of the Jesus Movement," spent the year undergoing cancer treatments. He said we could use another revival of youth today.

Franklin Graham warned in a public letter that the nation’s “fiscal cliff” is “nothing compared to the spiritual and moral cliff that is far more destructive to our nation than any
economic concerns." He mentioned several revivals recorded in the Old Testament, and said the Lord might also send us a revival if we “earnestly seek Him, stand for His truths, and pray for America.”

Joel Rosenberg, an influential author and speaker, offered a Simulcast called "Implosion" was seen at nearly 300 locations across the nation. He spoke about the very serious financial and moral threats to America just days after the release of his latest book (with the same name). He issued a strong call for a "Third Great Awakening" in our history.

Christian Radio and TV

In nearly every community in America one can find instruction and encouragement twenty-four hours a day on local Christian radio and television. Those who want to prepare their hearts for a revival would be wise to tune in to these inspirational programs.

Christian Internet

In June the Christian Post published an article that said there is a revival of Bible knowledge because of new technologies. It is reminiscent of the spread of God's Word after the invention of the printing press! Robert C. Crosby wrote:

Not only do billions around the world now have access to the Bible online, and not only are many of them actually reading it, they're also actively engaging with the Word of God—and with one another.

The physical roads of the Roman Empire that connected people throughout the then-known world, made the spread of the Gospel possible. Today the Internet, the smartphone, the tablet, and social media are the "new Roman roads" that connect millions of homes and individuals with the ability to engage others with the teaching of the Bible.

One example of the power of the Internet was a You Tube video by a little-known young man named Jerrerson Bethke. It was called, “Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus.” The video was a testimony about his “journey to discover this truth – the difference between Jesus and false religion.” The video went viral and has now been seen by more than 72 thousand people.

Prayer movements

Lou Engle, founder of The Call prayer movement released his book, “Digging the Wells of Revival.” He says God is preparing to pour out his power upon the spiritual descendants of people like Jonathan Edwards. Engle's prophetic call urges us to renew our covenant with God and anticipate the greatest revival America has seen.

In May The Muslim country of Indonesia allowed the World Prayer Assembly (WPA) to host what is believed to be the world's largest Christian intercessory prayer event. More than 9,000 evangelical church leaders from over 60 countries met daily for four days in the 11,000-seat Sentul International Convention Center in Jakarta and other venues.

One night, leaders were joined by other Indonesian Christians, all of whom together amounted to over 100,000, nearly making the 80,000-seat Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta, where they assembled for a church service, burst at the seams. Delegates focused their prayers and discussions on how to best spread the Gospel and promote Christian unity worldwide.

“Operation World” is an excellent resource for all who would join their hearts in prayer for revival and the work of missions worldwide. Their website states, “Join people from every nation, praying for people in every nation. You will receive daily prayer reminders for a different
country or need somewhere in the world. Through your prayers, you will change lives and nations. Sign up now!

**My Hope with Billy Graham**

This year will see the escalation and culmination of a great evangelistic effort called "My Hope with Billy Graham." The program actually began 10 years ago to teach the message of hope to the world in places where the aging evangelist could not physically travel. In December the movement began to mobilize to equip up to 300,000 people to open their homes in conjunction with Mr. Graham's 95th birthday message to the nation in November 2013.

"Already over 3,000 churches have now registered on our website to be involved – we're working toward having up to 50,000 churches involved," said Preston Parrish, vice president of "My Hope with Billy Graham."

Get involved: My Hope with Billy Graham

Get involved: My Hope with Billy Graham

See: Revival, Missions

**Becoming a Competent Prophecy Teacher**

If you are a pastor or Bible teacher, and you wish you were better prepared to teach the subject of prophecy, here are some suggestions for moving in that direction. Hopefully they will seem realistic and attainable to you if you pause first to consider your present capabilities, and how you attained them. How much time has it taken for you to learn all that you already know about the Bible? What have you done in the past to get to your present state of knowledge? Did you wait until you knew “everything” to start to teach? If not, what did you teach at the beginning? Did teaching what you already know help you learn more? The point is, it didn’t happen overnight. You can apply the same learning curve to this vital additional area of Bible knowledge, and begin to bless your listeners with the basics as you continue to learn more and more of this fascinating subject.

1 - Decide to begin to learn more now with a view to teach others soon. (Goal-setting)
2 - Identify the method of understanding that is most biblical. (Big Picture, Discernment)
   Prayerfully read the Bible, looking for prophecies. (Three-month or One-year program)
   They’re everywhere! – Genesis, Psalms, Gospels, Epistles, Especially the Prophets, and the Book of Revelation - See Harmony of Revelation.
   Read prophecy overview books by pastors and teachers who take the Bible literally.
   (Start with our book, Connecting the Dots: A Handbook of Bible Prophecy. It includes an extensive Bibliography.)
   Use the Internet wisely to learn more. Prophecy Central is a good place to start. Also see our List of Prophecy Sites, and our blogs about Systematic Prophecy part 1, 2, & 3
3 - Hopefully you arrive at the same place we are. You don’t need to know this now, but the theological description is the premillennial, pre-tribulation Rapture position. Premillennial means belief that Christ will return before a literal thousand-year time of peace and prosperity. Pre-tribulation means we understand that the Rapture will take place before the Tribulation period.
   If you are leaning toward another position, go ahead, but keep an open mind. You will not usually find the same amount of material on the other possibilities, because for
many of their adherents, prophecy is not a favorite topic. It may just be a difficult subject to explain from their non-literal approach to Scripture.

4 - Invite a positive, balanced special speaker to introduce the subject to your group. This was a wonderful experience for me when I was a young pastor – Our guest speaker was Nathan Meyer. His teaching opened our minds to a whole new realm of Bible knowledge.

5 - Teach a Bible Study group using materials prepared by a trusted author/teacher.

6 - Teach a class or congregation a message or short series on the Second Coming of Christ.

7 - Keep learning about prophecy, but balance it with the rest of your studies.
   - Olivet Discourse – Before “mystery of the Church” revealed
   - Paul’s teaching about Rapture, judgments, etc.
   - Book of Revelation
   - Daniel
   - Charts from trusted sources
   - A lifetime of learning more from the Prophets

8 - Share gradually what you are in the process of learning.

9 - Teach with confidence but don’t be dogmatic. Remember it is about the future!

10 - Invite feedback, questions. If don’t have answer now, offer to get one for a future meeting.

11 - Don’t invent new ways of seeing things/or trust your own interpretations without adequate study. Collaborate with other trusted teachers.

As you can see, these are definitely the kind of times Jesus and the prophets said would come. However, we should not be afraid, because the bad times are just a prelude to a wonderful new chapter in our history. Jesus will return to put a stop to the evil, will rule in righteousness for 1000 years, and then usher in a “New Heaven and New earth!”

In the meanwhile, let us heed Peter’s advice: “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,” - 2 Peter 3:11
HARMONY OF THE REVELATION
Connecting the Dots: A Handbook of Bible Prophecy

Connecting the Dots explains the big picture of things to come in a simple, understandable way.

The book was published two years ago and has had an excellent reception and high reviews.

To learn more about the contents of the book click here.

Order the book directly from Prophecy Central or ask your Christian bookstore to order it for you. Electronic versions are available from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Google.

A free Study Guide is now available for personal enrichment or group study.

Visit Prophecy Central
Be sure to visit Prophecy Central often to get updates on all of these issues and many others. There is literally news of interest to prophecy students every single day! And remember to test every development against the Bible itself as we wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Scripture references are from the New International Bible (NIV). Documentation, Scriptural references and illustrations may be found in the various sections of Prophecy Central, “A World of Information about Bible Prophecy.”
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2 Titus 2:13
3 See Chapter 10 (online) of Sir Robert Anderson’s “The Coming Prince.” This prophecy is recorded in Daniel 9:20-27. The prophecy is actually about “seventy weeks of years.” The first 69 weeks represent 483 years (69 X 7) beginning with the decree issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus in the twentieth year of his reign, authorizing Nehemiah to rebuild the fortifications of Jerusalem. It ends on the very day that Christ offered himself to be King of the Jews, but was rejected by his enemies. There is a gap between the 69 weeks and the 70th week. During this gap the mystery of the Church Age unfolds. After the Rapture of the Church, the final seven years of the prophecy will take place.  
4 Gary Stearman, Egypt, Aswan, and the Coming Flood., Prophecy in the News,  
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