

It was a beautiful summer morning in New York City – blue skies and not a cloud. Thousands of workers in the financial district were getting an early start on the day. Some exchanged morning pleasantries with coworkers. Others grabbed a quick cup of coffee and settled in. Some were gathered around water coolers, replaying all the excitement of Monday Night Football they had seen the evening before, while others still pondered the chances of the Yankees winning a fourth straight World Series title.

Little did they know that in just a few minutes their lives would be over and a nation would be scarred forever. It is a day we will never forget. But what will we remember? And more importantly, what will we learn?

It
Came
Without
Warning

By
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**"I hate to say it this way, but this might be the day
when America's luck ran out."**

Jeff Greenfield
ABC News
September 11, 2001

Chapter I

A National Tragedy

“...Unless the lord shields the city
the guards maintain a useless watch.”

Psalm 127:2

On Tuesday morning, September 11, 2001, at 8:45 A.M., the face of America was permanently altered. At that moment, American Airlines flight 11, a Boeing 767, bound for Los Angeles with 76 passengers and 11 crew members aboard, slammed violently into the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York City.

But the horror of this national tragedy
was only beginning.

Eighteen minutes later, United Airlines flight 175, also a Boeing 767, en route to Los Angeles with 51 passengers and nine crew members aboard, approached building two of the Trade Center. It then banked hard to the left and ripped with convulsions through the building, bursting into a giant ball of fire.

But the nightmare was not over.

At 9:43 A.M., American Airlines flight 77, a Boeing 757 which had departed an hour and a half earlier from Dulles Airport with 53 passengers and 6 crew members tore into the west wing of the Pentagon. According to estimates, the plane was traveling at 345 miles an hour at impact. Theodore Olsen, the Solicitor General of the United States was on the phone with his wife Barbara, a hostage on that flight, when the plane exploded in flames. When describing that call, he said, “The line just went dead, and I knew she was gone.”

Seventeen minutes later, United Airlines flight 93, a Boeing 757 bound for San Francisco with 33 passengers and 7 crew members, was being forced down and crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh. Some have speculated the plane may have been headed for the Capitol, or even the White House.

Almost every American knows where they were as the tragic events of September 11 unfolded, and just when we thought it couldn't get worse, new devastation was being proclaimed over America's television and radio airways. The two World Trade Center buildings, which stood as great cathedrals to America's financial strength, were mortally wounded, and within two hours crumbled into rubble, burying hundreds of rescue workers and thousands of office personnel in a grave made of broken and melted glass, steel, and concrete. Meanwhile, as Americans stood stunned at the carnage unfolding before their eyes, halfway around the world, the enemies of Israel and the United States could be seen celebrating in their streets.

An Act of War

This day has been characterized as the worst in U.S. history—worse than Pearl Harbor—worse than Oklahoma City—worse than the explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger. It was a time that filled our nation with not only grief, but rage, and if we're really honest with ourselves, fear.

The events of September 11 have been characterized as an act of war. President Bush, when first speaking to the nation, called them “an attack on freedom [perpetrated] by a faceless coward.” But later, these cowards were given faces and names, and today America tries to sort out this horrible act of viciousness.

The questions are simple: How could this act of terror have happened? And what can be done to prevent it from ever happening again? The initial word from the State Department was that this tragedy may have been unavoidable because IT CAME WITHOUT WARNING.

The Aftermath

Today, much of the world is still in a state of disbelief over this senseless loss of life. Even leaders in professing Christianity seem puzzled by such an apparent triumph of evil. They grope for answers. But the answers are as elusive as the wind. We know it's there but we cannot contain it.

The nineteen hijackers who commandeered four commercial jetliners resorted to stealth and guile when boarding their designated flights. They looked as normal and as innocent as any other passenger. But they were very different. While the other passengers and crew settled in for what they thought would be an uneventful trans-continental flight, these killers prepared for blood. Their tools were surprise and confusion, and most of all, fear. And they used these tools well.

The scenes aboard the four aircraft were unquestionably heart breaking. On one side passengers were fighting back disbelief. Some tried to comfort each other. Others used phones on their planes to call loved ones to express their most intimate feelings and ironically their thankfulness. Most, if not all, must have spent their last precious moments praying to God for deliverance. Meanwhile in the cockpits of each of these planes, evil had run amuck and the forces of darkness were calling out to their god and preparing to offer him a "sacrifice."

In a free society the fanatics who orchestrated this horrific act may never have been detected. But God certainly knew what was going to take place that fateful day. He could look into the hearts of those nineteen terrorists whose despicable act would not only snuff out the lives of over three thousand men, women, and children, but also mangle the hearts of countless thousands of family members, business associates, and friends, not to mention an entire nation. Certainly God could have stopped this ungodly act. But He chose to allow it to happen. Why?

What does 9/11 say about the world in general and the United States in particular? Was this a random act? Or is it the beginning of a series of calamities that will cripple the mightiest nation in history and escalate to a point where human survival will be threatened? How does God see evil and how will he correct a world so driven by hate?

Chapter II

A Day of Distress

“And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations...and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

Revelation 19:15

The images of 9/11 will live forever in the minds of all Americans. And although it is important to move forward, it is also very important to remember. Those who paid the ultimate price on this day were not alone in their suffering. Much of the nation and the world watched in disbelief as each chapter of this grotesque story unfolded. Through the lenses of American news broadcasts, the world was made an eyewitness to a level of horror never before experienced by the most prosperous nation in history. Death and destruction seemed to be everywhere.

Lasting Images

The pictures carried on television that day were truly sickening. The south tower exploding into flames. The huge cloud of smoke engulfing both buildings and sucking the life out of those who couldn't escape. Scores of innocent people jumping to their death rather than suffer the excruciating pain of the flames and smoke. The sound of the towers as they convulsed in agony before collapsing. The great cloud of dust and soot rushing down the streets of the city. The stream of people running for their lives as a great wall of smoke pursued. People covered with so much residue from the collapsed towers that you couldn't tell their race - everyone was gray. And then there were the screams, whose echoes continue to haunt us to this very day. This truly was a day of distress. And to many it may even have appeared to be apocalyptic. But what does God's word say about apocalyptic events? How does the Bible describe the end time? Does it speak of great destruction such as was experienced on 9/11 or is such talk simply the product of "doomsday" religious fanatics?

The Day of The Lord

The Bible speaks of a time when great distress will come upon the earth. This time is called "the day of the Lord" as well as "the day of God's wrath" and represents the last year of man's reign on this planet. It is a time when man will experience firsthand how serious God is about defiance to Him and His law. The prophet Joel characterized this period as a time of such devastation that few would survive.

And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and **who can abide it?** (Joel 2:11)

Joel was not the only one to describe "the day of the Lord" in such terms. The apostle John said it this way.

For the great day of his wrath is come; and **who shall be able to stand?** (Rev. 6:17)

John also stated that this would be a time when even the mightiest men on earth would be consumed with fear.

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. (Rev. 6:15-16, see also: Isa. 2:19)

John would later state that during this time, the world would be so filled with terror that mankind would actually seek death, but death would be denied.

And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. (Rev. 9:6)

The prophet Zephaniah wrote that the time would come when mighty men would be so distressed they would literally be brought to tears.

The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hastens greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. (Zeph. 1:14-15)

The Day of the Lord will be a time when no one on earth without God's protection will be able to escape. There will be no place to hide, nor will man be able to buy his way out of the distress soon to come.

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land. (Zeph. 1:18)

The great prophet Isaiah described the overwhelming strength of God's judgment on a world totally defiant to Him.

For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. (Isa. 66:15-16)

The prophet Hosea referred to this time as "the day of rebuke" (Hosea 5:9). During it God will chastise His people with great strength. When describing this correction, God says, "I will pour out My wrath upon them like water" (verse 10).

The magnitude of God's judgment on a rebellious planet is inconceivable but real. It is a time that will see seven trumpet plagues unleashed with unimaginable force and conclude with seven vial plagues, the power of which will make absolutely clear that God is in charge of His creation.

It Begins with Silence

The Bible goes into considerable detail when describing this period called the "Day of God's Wrath," or the "Day of the Lord," which is soon to come upon all mankind. The eighth chapter of the book of Revelation indicates that it begins with silence.

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. (Rev. 8:1)

The Bible does not say why this silence takes place. However, it is possible that God may be reflecting on what He is about to do. It is important to understand that God is a God of love and mercy and the action He is about to take must cause Him great sadness. However, God is also a God of righteousness who will correct – even severely – His children. The book of Hebrews declares that God corrects those whom He loves.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. (Heb. 12:6)

The Bible makes it absolutely clear that the time is coming when the Great Creator will use the rod of correction on a world buried in human depravity and evil. Imagine the atrocities that have become a part of everyday life. Today, we live in a world filled with violence. Terrorism has become commonplace in the Middle East, and the United States is anxiously waiting for what experts now call "the inevitable."

However, it is not simply extremists with explosives that punctuate our lives today. Evil has saturated what many in the Western world would call contemporary morals. Consider just a few examples. Since the Supreme Court upheld *Rowe vs. Wade*, over 40 million abortions have been performed in the United States alone. Advocates of this practice defend it in the name of freedom. But how does God see it?

A War on Traditional Values

Today, organizations that espouse traditional values have actually been characterized as extremist. The Boy Scouts of America are just one example. This institution, which has long been regarded as a builder of character in millions of American boys is now labeled in the secular world as a “hate group” because of their position on homosexuality. They were actually booed at a national political convention when they came out as the designated honor guard carrying the American flag. But there is much more.

Social engineers like the ACLU and People for the American Way, which exert tremendous political and cultural influence, will in one breath argue that the mention of God in a public setting poses a clear and present danger to the republic, and in the next, defend an artist’s right to display a work entitled *Piss Christ* as essential in preserving our liberties. Hot on the heels of this logic is an avalanche of smut and garbage all posing as freedom of expression – but God forbid anyone call it what it really is.

Pornography now fills the Internet, making it accessible to anyone of any age with a computer. Additionally, our children learn values from entertainment venues that condone premarital sex, promote obscene language, and advocate fashion that cries out “I’m easy.” Virtue has all but disappeared and has been replaced by an attitude that shouts “Get it! Get it now! Get it right now!” Meanwhile, in the business world, major corporations have been rocked by scandal. A new morality has taken hold of corporate America. Under this model, senior executives fabricate balance sheets and their accountants swear to the numbers.

Today in the United States alone, people lie, steal, and cheat with impunity, and it is not just the secular world. Even religious leaders find themselves in a mire of self-made filth. The Catholic Church is currently defending itself from allegations that numerous priests have routinely molested young boys in their parishes for decades—this, with the full knowledge of church leaders that certain priests were pedophiles. Additionally, while decrying the evils of society, television evangelists have been caught in adulterous acts with prostitutes and even members of their own congregations. Faith healers proclaiming “Jesus is Lord” have been exposed as charlatans, scamming thousands of people searching desperately for hope, out of millions of dollars. But it doesn’t end there. Governments, too, have failed to provide true leadership.

In the great nations on earth, politicians posture themselves as moral leaders. But while they condemn social inequity, their lives are filled with promiscuity and layered with corruption and deceit. In the Western world, we see courts that oppress the innocent while money can buy “justice.” Add to that the fact that legislators and courts alike seem bent on protecting the United States from the ***Ten Commandments*** while at the same time giving the keys of the kingdom to those who believe morality is relative.

The Last Days

The Bible declares that man will be so far from God in the last days that sin will literally fill the earth. Jesus Christ characterized this time as being similar to the days of Noah (Mt. 24:37-39), and the Bible states that at that time, man’s thoughts were “only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). When writing to the evangelist Timothy, the apostle Paul characterized the end time this way:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. (2Tim. 3:1-4)

This is the world we live in. With all its technology, it is filled with violence. With all its knowledge, it is filled with ignorance and superstition. With all its wealth, it is filled with poverty. With all its laws, it is filled with crime.

If you were to measure today's world by God's great moral code, the **Ten Commandments**, how would it do? Every aspect of society is corrupt. Its politics, its education, its culture, and even its religions have failed and have created a world filled with suffering. This is the world God sees, and He couldn't possibly be pleased.

It is true that God is patient and longsuffering, but the scriptures also reveal that there is a time when the Creator will delay no more His judgment on man. Notice what the apostle John was inspired to write when recording the book of Revelation.

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that **there should be time no longer**: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. (Rev. 10:5-7)

The force the Eternal will unleash through 14 angelic beings (seven with trumpets and seven with vials) will graphically demonstrate that He is a God of great strength the likes of which no power in the universe can overcome. During this time, fire will literally rain down from heaven, seas will become blood, and vegetation will be consumed (Rev. 8:7-8). And that is just the beginning.

At one point during this year of judgment, a massive military attack and counter-attack will take place involving a 200 million man infantry (Rev. 9:15-16). To put this number in perspective, it is 400 times greater than the total coalition forces used during Desert Storm and over 150 times greater than the entire military machine of the United States. This military conflict will bring greater death and destruction than any war in human history. The casualties will number in the billions.

A Cynical View

Many in the world today totally dismiss the prophecies of the Bible concerning the last days. Some regard such talk as "silly." Others mock it as "gloom and doom" or "fear" religion. On the other hand, those who will engage in apocalyptic discussions generally argue that there has always been evil in the world and man has always been able to rise above it. Why should it be any different today? Some even vilify those who seek answers in the scriptures as the possible cause of 9/11. After all, wasn't it religious extremism that drove the hijackers to wage their "jihad?"

Tragically, the vast majority of people on earth have absolutely no idea what God's word says about the very days we are living in. As a result, what people don't understand, they generally dismiss as either untrue or unimportant. The Bible warned that in the last days many would be cynical about the great distress foretold by the prophets of God thousands of years ago. Notice the words of the apostle Peter.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts... (2Pet. 3:3)

The real tragedy with this attitude is almost too obvious to mention. Simply put, why would anyone take precautions to avoid something they are convinced won't happen?

Now imagine if it does.

Chapter III

A Great Surprise

“Because you have kept the word of my patience,
I will also keep you from the hour of temptation,
which shall come upon the world,
to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

Revelation 3:10

The Bible goes into great detail when describing this period called “the Day of the Lord.” The scriptures declare that it will not only be a time of great destruction, but that it will come as a surprise to the vast majority of people on earth. Notice the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Church at Thessalonica.

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (1Th. 5:1-3)

Paul was not the only apostle to use the image of a “thief in the night” when describing the last days and ultimately the return of Jesus Christ. Notice the words of the apostle Peter.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (2Pet. 3:10)

In the book of Revelation, a letter written to the Church at Sardis declares that the return of Jesus Christ will be like the entrance of a thief into an unguarded home.

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shall not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shall not know what hour I will come upon thee. (Rev. 3:3)

God’s word declares emphatically that His people are to be aware of conditions in the world and how those conditions relate to what the scriptures call “the last days.” The Bible reveals both a blessing to those who watch and the consequences for failing to do so.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. (Rev. 16:15)

There are many who see John’s words as literary as opposed to literal. However, it is important to understand that conquering armies throughout history have often subjected their enemies to abject humiliation and shame by forcing them to strip naked and herding them like animals. When establishing His covenant with the nation of Israel, God warned that one of the consequences of rebellion against Him would be that Israel would have to serve its’ enemies in nakedness (Dt. 28:48). Additionally, a stern letter written to God’s Church at Laodicea reveals that complacency and an attitude of self-sufficiency is a precursor to this shame (Rev. 3:17). This being the case, these powerful words recorded by John should cause all Christians to seriously take inventory of their spiritual lives.

No One Knows the Day or Hour

The admonition in scripture is clear: God's people must always be ready because the specific time of the return of Jesus Christ is not known. Jesus Himself stated that even He did not know the precise time of His return. Notice His words.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but [only] the Father... (Mk. 13:32)

Even after His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus indicated that the time of his return was still in the hands of God the Father.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. (Acts 1:6-7)

Here, from the very lips of Jesus Christ comes a clear declaration regarding His return to this earth: "I am coming, but you don't know when." This being the case, it is incumbent upon every Christian that he or she be in a constant state of preparedness. Failure to do so could be catastrophic—Jesus said as much. The gospel of Luke records a profound lesson given by Him regarding the importance of being prepared and the tragic consequences of complacency.

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. (Lk. 12:35-40)

Throughout the Bible, God's people are admonished to "watch" because we do not know the day or the hour of Jesus' return. Tragically, the Bible also declares that many, even in God's Church, will be unprepared and totally caught off guard when the events surrounding His return come to pass.

A Lesson from Ten Virgins

One of the sternest warnings ever given by Jesus Christ to God's Church came in the form of a "kingdom parable." It is called the Parable of the Ten Virgins and was given during the last days of Jesus' life. This parable bears reading in its entirety. Notice what Jesus says.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Mt. 25:1-13)

With this parable, Jesus was explaining that the consequences for failing to “watch” are enormous. Simply put, the tremendous privilege of being a part of the greatest wedding in the history of the universe (see Rev. 19:6-9) could be lost because people who should have known better became complacent and did not take seriously God’s word concerning the very days we are living in.

The great American patriot and U.S. president, Thomas Jefferson, once said, “Eternal vigilance is the price we pay for liberty.” This is also the price God’s people must pay to escape what the Bible characterizes as the worst time in the history of the world (Mt. 24:21; Jer. 30:7). The parable of the ten virgins is a warning to God’s end-time Church that they are to be ready, doing His work, living His life, and WATCHING.

Chapter IV Not Without Warning

“Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

Acts 20:31

The Bible states with absolute clarity that the events surrounding the end of the age and the return of Jesus Christ will come as a great surprise to the vast majority of people on earth, even to many within His Church (Mt. 24:42-42, 1Thes. 5:2, 2Pet. 3:10, Rev. 16:15). The scriptures also reveal that although it will be a surprise to many, IT WILL NOT COME WITHOUT WARNING.

God believes in warnings. He does so because it is a part of His fundamental fairness. He is a God of great mercy—and unlike a terrorist, He does not rejoice in calamity. In short, you will never see Him dancing in the streets when man suffers, even when man suffers at His hand (Ezk. 18:23, 33:11).

Furthermore, the Almighty has no desire to “sucker punch” mankind. On the contrary, The Great God of Heaven is committed to extending to His human family every chance possible to avoid the horrible devastation that will come upon this world. The bottom line is this—God believes in warnings. The Bible is a book of warnings. It records in great detail what the world will be like in the last days and the specific steps the Creator is going to take to prevent man from destroying this planet.

The Olivet Prophecy

One of the most powerful descriptions of the end time was given by Jesus Christ to His apostles just days before His crucifixion. This prophecy is arguably the most famous warning ever uttered by the Messiah. It is recorded in great detail in three of the four gospels (Mt. 24, Mk. 13, Lk. 21).

When Jesus gave this prophecy, He was in Jerusalem preparing to keep His final Passover. While there, His disciples were showing Him the temple and commented regarding how magnificent it was. The gospels of Mark and Luke indicate that the disciples were marveling at the stones used in its construction (Mk.13:1; Lk.21:5). Jesus then made a pronouncement that must have rocked these men. Notice what He said.

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things (the stones the disciples had just shown him)? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. (Mt. 24:2)

This prediction by Jesus is even more remarkable when one considers how massive some of the stones of the temple were. The great Jewish historian Josephus wrote of single stones that were 40 cubits long and pillars that were 25 cubits high. (See Josephus, War of the Jews, Book V, Ch. v.i.). And in one sentence, Jesus said they were all coming down.

When the disciples heard these words, they couldn't contain themselves. They followed Jesus out of the city, across the half-mile wide Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives. It was there that they pressed Him to expand on His shocking statement. The disciples began by asking Jesus a very pointed three-part question.

And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Mt. 24:3)

What would follow on that spring day in Judea were words of uncanny precision and insight. Jesus laid out a picture of life in the last days that could be read in any newspaper today and scarcely draw a raised eye. But the Messiah spoke these words over nineteen centuries ago and when doing so acknowledged He was describing the end of the world. His words reveal a genuine reason for this particular generation to be deeply concerned. They included a series of warnings concerning religious, political, social, and environmental conditions that would grow worse in intensity until they would reach a state that would threaten human survival. But Jesus also spoke of deliverance to those few who would truly heed His warning.

Chapter V

The First Warning: Religious Deception

"And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat upon him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer"

Revelation 6:2

When the disciples questioned Jesus about the end of the world and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, they couldn't possibly have known how He would answer them. Regrettably, Jesus' words are still a mystery to the overwhelming majority of people who consider themselves "believers." Those who doubt this need only to ponder Jesus' first warning—a warning that has gone almost totally unheeded in the professing Christian world today.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (Mt. 24:4-5)

A Religious Babylon

Today we live in a world full of religions, with new faiths emerging every day. But Jesus was addressing a faith that asserted a belief in Him: "Many will come saying I (Jesus) am the Christ and shall deceive many."

How is this possible? How can those who profess Jesus Christ be guilty of deception? The answer is surprisingly simple. The vast majority of professing Christians today are not true Christians. They do not teach what Jesus taught, believe what Jesus believed, or do what Jesus did. Instead, most Christians believe they have the right to decide for themselves how they will worship God and His Son. As a result, most "believers" have embraced a faith that is light years away from that found in the scriptures. Consider just a few examples.

In the Protestant world, the two most "holy" times of the year are **Christmas** and **Easter**. However, these days are not Biblical, but rather come from ancient Pagan worship. This is a fact that even leaders in professing Christian churches will admit. However, their admission is usually followed with words to the effect of: "It doesn't matter because God looks on the heart," or "It's ok because we confiscated it for Christ." This justification is offered despite the fact that God's word says, "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer.10:1) and despite the fact that God's word prohibits integrating Pagan practices into the true faith. Notice His command to the children of Israel.

Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. (Dt.12:30-32)

Consider the power of these words; "**you shall not add to nor diminish from it.**" Here the Eternal God is stating in the strongest of language that man does not have the moral authority to decide for himself how he will worship his Creator. God alone has that authority.

Despite this command, millions who consider themselves true believers actively promote festivals that not only contradict the scriptures but actually mock the very God of the Bible. They embrace pagan festivals and reject the days God set apart as holy convocations (Lev. 23). The prophet Amos once recorded God's opinion of man's holidays and festivals and his words were not flattering. God declares they are abhorrent to Him.

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. (Amos 5:21-22)

The Result of Defiance

The great prophet Ezekiel was used by God to warn Israel that His judgment and their captivity would come upon them because of their defiance to Him and His law—specifically mentioned was Israel's profaning of God's Sabbath and Holy Days.

And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. But the house of Israel **rebelled** against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. (Ezk. 20:11-13)

Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. (Ezk. 20:16)

Notwithstanding the children **rebelled** against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. (Ezk. 20:21)

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God also said that if man wants to make up his own faith, it is his right. However, if he chooses this course, his Creator will not accept his expressions of love toward Him.

As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. (Ezk. 20:39)

God's Holy Days

God's true Sabbath and holy days are clearly defined in the scriptures (Lev. 23). They picture a great plan of salvation and have been observed by God's people in both Old Testament Israel and the New Covenant Church. Paul kept the seventh day Sabbath, not Sunday (Acts 13:42, 17:2, 18:4). He observed the Passover, not Easter (Acts 20:6, 1Cor. 5:7, 11:23). He kept the day of Atonement, not Lent (Acts 27:9). But it doesn't end there. Paul, as well as all the apostles, taught that God's law was alive and well in the New Testament, not abandoned by Him simply to be replaced by PAGAN myth.

Tragically, however, much of Christianity today is deeply rooted in fables. God's apostle understood this reality and wrote of it to the evangelist Timothy. Notice what he observed.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2Tim. 4:3-4)

False Ministers Look Good

Make no mistake about it; false ministers are persuasive. Their message resonates with their audiences because it sounds so good. That is the danger with deception. It sounds like the truth. This is true in part because the ones delivering these messages are for the most part sincere and appear to be decent and God fearing men and women. Additionally, many are brilliant scholars with what appears to be a great command of the scriptures. Their words seem true. The apostle Paul described such ministers in his letter to the Church at Corinth and his words were blunt to say the least.

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2Cor. 11:13-15)

The great prophet Isaiah wrote of the end time and described it as a period when God's people would despise His law. At that time they would desire their ministers to preach "smooth" things.

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a **rebellious** people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits... (Isa 30:8-10)

When speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, God excoriates ministers who claim to be his servants but speak lies and fables. Furthermore, He reveals that they are the victims of their own deception.

I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart. (Jer. 23:25-26)

In the professing Christian world today, there is a plethora of beliefs that are found nowhere in the scriptures. The Bible does not say the soul is immortal, that the saved go to heaven, that the condemned suffer for all eternity in an ever-burning hell. Nowhere do the scriptures claim that God is trying to save all mankind at this time or that God accepts you just as you are. But these beliefs are taught from the pulpits of Christian churches every Sunday. If true believers in the first century Church were alive today, they would be astonished at where the faith has gone.

Password: Christianity

For those who think that all one has to do to enter God's Kingdom is utter "a sinner's prayer" and profess "Jesus is Lord," think again. Christianity is a way of life, not a password or slogan. It is a walk, not words. It requires steadfast dedication and commitment. The eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews describes great champions of faith that were prepared to give up everything - including their lives - for God's Kingdom. This is the loyalty God requires. Nothing else will do. It is a loyalty that puts God and His Kingdom first (Mt. 6:33). Jesus described such loyalty this way.

He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. (Mt. 10:37-38)

Tragically, there are many who profess to be followers of Christ, but reject the very law He ordained as the God of the Old Testament—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The consequences for this behavior are catastrophic—Jesus said as much. When giving what is commonly referred to as the *Sermon on the Mount*, the Messiah described a period of judgment involving people who claimed they were Christian but were not. Imagine hearing these words.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Mt. 7:21-23)

The word "iniquity" used by the Messiah in this passage is better translated "lawlessness." Therefore, Jesus was saying, "you that break the law..." But that is exactly what the vast majority of professing Christians do and teach. They claim God's law is done away, that it was nailed to the cross. These words represent the justification in the Christian world for breaking God's Sabbaths and embracing festivals that come from the pagan world. Some have even suggested that God's law was a burden and that Christianity today is liberated. However, notice what your Bible says.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous [burdensome]. (1Jn. 5:2-3)

When giving the *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus warned of the grave danger of thinking that God's great law would somehow no longer be in effect as a result of the work He would do on earth. These are HIS words.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (Mt. 5:17-18)

It is hard to imagine that this utterance of the Messiah could be more clear. Those who argue that New Covenant Christians have no obligation to honor God's law will one day stand in judgment for such thinking.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (verse 19)

A Great Moral Code

God's law is His great moral code that not only defines sin (1Jn. 3:4), but also defines love (Rom. 13:10). That law reflects the very mind of God Himself. And if those who claim to be His servants speak contrary to it, God says it is because they are in darkness. Here is how the great prophet Isaiah expressed this truth.

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (Isa. 8:20)

Today, the vast majority of professing Christian ministers are truly in darkness. As hard as this is to believe, it is true. Jesus' words in the *Olivet Prophecy* regarding religious deception (Mt. 24:4-5) stand as a powerful reminder that God's law and the true faith will be under a relentless attack and that a false Christianity will masquerade as genuine and truly will deceive many.

Chapter VI

The Second Warning: War and Conflict

“My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart;
my heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace,
because thou hast heard, O my soul,
the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war”

Jeremiah 4:19

When giving the *Olivet Prophecy*, Jesus did not end with a warning regarding religious deception (Mt. 24:4-5). He would go on to explain that news broadcasts would be filled with talk of war.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom... (Mt. 24:6-7)

The term “nation” used by Matthew when recording Jesus’ words is very interesting. It comes from the Greek word *ethnos*. It is where we get the terms “ethnic” and “ethnicity.” *Ethnos* is a term that pertains to race or nationality, not to country or realm. Here, almost 2000 years ago, Jesus was warning that in the last days, great racial strife would punctuate a significant part of society.

Today, race is at the center of almost all political discourse and the emotions run deep. In the United States, racial tensions have fractured what was once a great melting pot, and if Jesus’ words come to pass, the emotions will move from words and escalate to full-blown violence.

Jesus then warned that war and conflict would become commonplace around the world (“kingdom shall rise against kingdom”), and once again, He was right on target. Today, we live in a world that is truly on the brink of war. Whether it is Iraq and Iran, India and Pakistan, Israel and a host of Arab nations, or the United States and its war on terror, the prospect of armed conflict appears to be a certainty.

Throughout history, the story of man has been a story of war. Peace is as elusive as the wind. We grasp for it, but it always seems to slip through our fingers. In six thousand years of human history the number of centuries where man has enjoyed real peace could easily be counted on one hand.

“Peace, Peace,” When There is No Peace

Down through the centuries man has made many attempts to craft a sustained peace, but all have failed. Treaties and alliances have been forged only to be broken. Even great institutions like the League of Nations and the United Nations have been assembled with the express purpose of building a bridge to peace in the world. The words that originally introduced the U.N. Charter express such a hope and at the same time a dreadful fear.

“...to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.”

Today, the purpose of this international community of nations is expressed in four broad goals.

- To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in

conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;

- To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;
- To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and
- To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

Despite its noble aspirations who really believes the world is safer now than it was when the U.N. charter was first ratified in 1945? Despite its cries for peace, war is everywhere. In truth, the United Nations has become little more than a forum for nations to bicker and point accusing fingers at each other. The prospects of war and conflict truly are everywhere—and there's the rub. Today we live in a world where the escalation of armed conflict between nations is not an option. This is because its destructive power is so vast that the entire world could be forced to pay for the actions of a very few.

An Appeal for Peace

When addressing the United Nations over forty years ago, President John F. Kennedy warned that “mankind must put an end to war – or war will put an end to mankind.” He went on to say, “Together we shall save our planet or together we shall perish in its flames.” Tragically, war and conflict are still everywhere—and today, mankind is like a little child playing with a loaded gun. It's only a matter of time until tragedy strikes.

Mutually Assured Destruction

During the “cold war,” the concept of “mutually assured destruction (MAD)” was advanced as a viable formula for insuring that the world's super powers would never engage in nuclear war. The thinking was that because the cost of such action to their respective nations was so high, countries such as the United States, the USSR, Britain, and China would “stand down” before launching a nuclear strike. But how effective is that concept if nuclear weapons fell into the hands of terrorists organizations such as the al-Quida, Hamas, or Hizballah? These fanatical groups also have goals: to kill and to die.

The Road to Peace

The great tragedy throughout human history is that man does not understand the root cause of war. However, the Bible does understand, and reveals that cause. Notice the words of the apostle James in his epistle to the twelve tribes of Israel that were scattered abroad.

From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? You lust, and have not: you kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts. (James 4:1-3)

The only way mankind will ever achieve a lasting peace is to change the way it thinks—and to do so it must make the most radical of transformations. No longer can humanity be driven by self will, but rather by an uncompromising selflessness and a genuine outgoing concern for others. Jesus Christ possessed such a mind and heart. His love for mankind was so great that He divested himself of the infinite power and glory He had known before coming to earth as a man (Jn. 17:1-5) and took upon himself the form of a servant. He then suffered the indignity of a torturous death (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus did this so that man

would be spared the eternal consequences of sin and instead be reconciled back to the Father (Rom. 5:10).

Without true humility, as well as compassion for others, mankind has sealed its fate in a tragic future. This is a profound truth that some of the world's great leaders have pondered. The late American general Douglas MacArthur summed up the challenge facing mankind living in a nuclear age this way.

“It must be of the spirit if mankind is truly going to save the flesh.”

Tragically, these words are as far from man as the east is from the west. Once again, war is everywhere. It stalks the earth in the form of great acts of violence perpetrated by world leaders on their own people as well as on their neighboring nations. But it also thrives in small towns and villages.

Within the great nations on earth, terrible acts of violence have become a part of their cultures. Consider the terms that fill newspapers every day: gang violence, domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse, just to name a few.

The United States is technologically the most advanced nation in history, yet its streets are filled with violence. Whether it's inner city gangs resorting to murder in defense of “their territory,” or small, rural high schools being ripped apart by students acting out some fantasy requiring the deaths of other students and faculty, the land of the free has become a nation of blood. And why should anyone be surprised? Violence is actually promoted in America. Our music and movies pay tribute to murder. Sporting events are punctuated by bench-clearing brawls and riots. Even celebrating has taken the form of violence. When athletic championships are won, city officials must implore their citizens not to destroy the very place they live and work. But that is not the end of it.

In the United States, simulated killing has become a part of its recreation. One of the most popular video games in America requires players to steal cars, fornicate with a prostitute, then kill the prostitute in order to retrieve the money paid for her “services.” One mother who purchased this game stated, “I don't think it's wrong because that is not where my child learns morals.” When her 13-year-old son was interviewed regarding the game his mother had purchased for him, he said, “I think it's cool. It's the closest thing to killing someone without really doing it.”

Meanwhile as America teaches its young to treat murder as a game, Arab nations around the world teach their children to aspire to become “suicide bombers.” They actually sing songs in primary schools that proclaim the nobility of strapping on explosives and going out to kill the “apes and pigs” (Jews).

President Ronald Reagan once said, “The world is a dangerous place.” His words are tragic but true. God's word describes the last days as similar to those in the time of Noah. The book of Genesis describes that period as a time when “the earth was filled with violence” (Gen. 6:11). Can you think of a better description of our world today?

Chapter VII

The Beginning of Sorrows

“Therefore I said, Look away from me;
I will weep bitterly, labor not to comfort me,
because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people”

Isaiah 22:4

After describing the ravages of war that mankind would bring upon himself in the last days, Jesus spoke of other catastrophic events that would define the world at that time. He indicated that the world would experience famine and disease, and even natural disasters (earthquakes), and that these events, coupled with religious deception and war, would constitute the catalyst for unprecedented devastation to come upon the earth. Jesus called them “the beginning of sorrows” (Mt. 24:8).

A Pale Horse

When the Messiah warned of religious deception, war, famine, and disease, His words were reflecting what the apostle John would later record when writing the book of Revelation or the Apocalypse. In this book seven seals are introduced. The first four of these seals are described as horsemen each riding a specific colored horse. The fourth horse and rider are very interesting. Notice the words John records:

And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:7-8)

The Greek word for “pale” used by John when describing this horse, is *chloros*. It is where the English word chloroform originates. It is a greenish, pale color and reflects a physical condition that is in the throws of death. With this in mind, consider what Jesus said about the last days. In the Olivet Prophecy He indicated that the ravages of pestilence are connected to war (Mt.24:7). This being the case, is it possible Jesus was describing biological or chemical warfare?

Bioterrorism: the New War

The threat of bioterrorism is very real in the world today. In the weeks following the September 11 attack on America, numerous cases were reported in which letters laced with Anthrax were sent through the mail resulting in several deaths.

Bioterrorism poses a very credible threat to human survival. In a very real sense it has changed the face of war. In part, because biospores are relatively easy to make and much less expensive to produce than nuclear weapons. To illustrate this point, consider the following: recently researchers from the University of New York at Stony Brook created a manmade version of the polio virus. This was accomplished simply by following a recipe found on the Internet and using gene sequences obtained from a mail order supply house. According to Dr. Eckard Wimmer, the leader of the biomedical research team, the experiment was conducted to prove that it was possible to do. “The reason we did it was to prove it could be done, and it is now a reality.” Dr. Wimmer went on to say, “This approach has been talked about but people didn’t take it seriously. Now people have to take it seriously.”

The experiment headed up by Dr. Wimmer proves that eradicating a virus such as polio doesn't mean the virus is gone forever. Biochemists can now reconstruct old viruses from blueprints easily accessible in scientific archives and from biological supplies purchased through the mail. Additionally, although the polio virus assembled in their laboratory was one of the simplest of human plagues, more complex and lethal strains such as smallpox could be created in the very near future. So serious is this threat that shortly after September 11, the United States began arranging for the production of enough smallpox vaccine to protect the entire U.S. population.

The potential destructive power of biological agents cannot be overstated. Dr. Barry Commoner, the former Director of Washington University's Center for the Biology of Natural Systems warned that chemical and biological agents make nuclear weapons "look like a child's toy."

In 1968, Seymore Hersh reported in New York Times Magazine that "to initiate the use of plague or anthrax diseases that can kill more than 90 percent of their victims, would be to set in motion a DOOMSDAY MACHINE on the planet." Today that machine is very close to being fully operational. Now imagine that power in the hands of a fanatic bent on destruction. Such people are not the slightest bit interested in the Geneva Convention. They do not care about the humane treatment of their adversaries. Many see themselves as agents of God on a holy mission to eradicate all who do not embrace their faith. These "warriors" will resort to any means to accomplish their end. Biological weapons are such a means.

When Jesus spoke of pestilence at the end time, he was not pondering its possibility. He was warning of its reality.

Chapter VIII

Jacob's Trouble

“And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face:
therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity;
Judah also shall fall with them.”

Hosea 5:5

After describing what He referred to as “the beginning of sorrows,” Jesus explained that certain events would accelerate the end of this age. These events include a great persecution of His people.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. (Mt. 24:9-10)

This will not be the first time God's people will have been persecuted. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews describes great heroes of faith and the tremendous sacrifices they made for the Kingdom of God. Notice the powerful words that conclude this chapter.

And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Heb. 11:32-38)

The Fifth Seal

The book of Revelation indicates that those who have been martyred down through the ages will not be alone in their suffering: that there is another great martyrdom yet to come. Notice the apostle John's words when describing the fifth seal of Revelation.

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. (Rev. 6:9-11)

These end-time servants of God will suffer, and even die because they will refuse to reject their faith. Their story is a very interesting one and is told in part in the twelfth chapter of the book of Revelation. Here it describes an event in which many in God's true Church are taken to a special place where they will receive supernatural protection from Satan and his agents on earth.

And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great

eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.(Rev. 12:13-16)

This deliverance of God's people is similar to the protection given to the children of Israel at the time of the exodus. The scriptures reveal that when Moses and Aaron were leading the Israelites out of Egypt, Pharaoh dispatched an army to destroy them. It is hard to believe this action was not inspired by Satan the devil in an attempt to wipe out a people he knew would play such a prominent role in God's plan of salvation. However, God thwarted this effort when He commanded the waters of the Red Sea to swallow that army up. The story of God's deliverance of Israel is recorded in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Exodus.

The flood described by John in Revelation which is cast out of the serpent's mouth (Rev. 12:16) is in all likelihood a great army, under the direction of a government referred to as the "beast" (Rev. 13). This government receives its power and authority from a great dragon (Rev. 13:2). Here, once again, Satan is bent on massacring God's people and thwarting His plan. But once again God supernaturally intervenes. He does so by commanding the earth to literally open up and swallow this army. However the battle is not over.

The Remnant

Regrettably, not all of God's Church will be delivered. Some, due to their own complacency, will be left behind. However, many of those will eventually repent and return to the faith with a great zeal for God and His law. These children of God are referred to as a "remnant" and are the target of a great attack by Satan the devil.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 12:17)

Notice this remnant "keeps the commandments" (see also Revelation 14:12), and they will pay for this obedience with their lives. The persecution they will suffer will be lead by a great false church (Rev. 13:15, 17:6) and her daughters (lesser churches) under the direct supervision of the great dragon (Satan). This persecution will be unspeakably cruel and will continue until the return of Jesus Christ. The prophet Daniel described this attack on God's people in the seventh chapter of the book bearing his name.

I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them until the Ancient of Days came. (Dan. 7:21-22)

The Church at Laodicea

These saints which are persecuted to the very end represent a part of God's true Church. Their path is a turbulent one with great disappointments, but in the end there is redemption. They are identified in the third chapter of Revelation as the Church at Laodicea. This Church at first reflects an attitude of complacency regarding their faith (Rev. 3:15). They are characterized as feeling "rich and increased with goods"(verse 17). Little do they know that in reality they are spiritually impoverished. When speaking to this Church, God exhorts them to "be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19). Their martyrdom is a great testimony that they will heed God's rebuke.

An Interesting Parallel

The fifth chapter of the Song of Solomon tells an interesting story that may very well be referring to the end-time Church at Laodicea. Here it describes a virgin who is very prosperous and comfortable (verse one)—so much so that when her beloved knocks on her door she doesn't immediately rise and meet him (verses 2-3). When she finally does go to open the door, her beloved is gone (verse 6). She then becomes grief stricken and beseeches the daughters of Jerusalem to help her seek out her beloved. During their quest, this virgin is persecuted and beaten (verse 7). But her desire for her beloved will not be quenched (verses 9-16). This story corresponds perfectly with that of the end-time remnant of God's true Church.

The Testimony of Jesus Christ

When describing this persecuted "remnant," the book of Revelation also states that they have the "testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). But what is this testimony? God's word answers this question and in doing so introduces a very interesting possibility concerning these believers. In Revelation chapter nineteen, verse ten it states, "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The Greek word for prophecy in this verse is *prophetia* and can mean "inspired speaking" or "to proclaim the future." This being the case, it is possible that instead of being a small underground community of believers trying not to bring attention to themselves, this remnant of God's Church eventually becomes a vital instrument in preaching the gospel. Under this scenario these servants of God are far more visible and stand as an indictment against a rebellious world. At the very least, they could play an important role in the support of two end-time witnesses God will raise up during the last days (see: Rev. 11). The scriptures strongly suggest that virtually all of this "remnant" will be martyred but will be rewarded for their sacrifice when Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom (see Rev. 20:4).

Jacob's Trouble

The scriptures declare that those in God's true Church are not the only ones to suffer great persecution. The physical descendants of Joseph on whom the patriarch Jacob bestowed his name (Gen.48:16) will also go into a horrible captivity.

This period is referred to in the scriptures as "Jacob's trouble" (Jer.30:7).

When describing this tribulation, Jeremiah wrote that the men of Israel and Judah would be in such agony that it would feel like a mother going through transition labor.

Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? (Jer. 30:6)

Jeremiah went on to write that this tribulation would be so great that there is nothing to which it could be compared.

Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble... (Jer. 30:7)

History and the scriptures reveal that both the nations of Israel and Judah were defeated and led away captive over twenty five hundred years ago. Israel was crushed by the armies of Assyria in 721-718 B.C. Assyria was a war-like kingdom and their approach to the conquest of other lands has been characterized as "brutal" and "unmerciful." As a general rule, they would destroy the culture of a territory's prior inhabitants. Additionally, they would often resort to great acts of savagery in their treatment of the people they conquered. According to the early twentieth century scholar Dr. Henry Halley, the Assyrians would subject their captives to acts of unspeakable cruelty.

Assyrians were great warriors... They built their state on the loot of other peoples. They practiced cruelty. They skinned their prisoners alive, or cut off their hands, feet, noses, ears, or put out their eyes, or pulled out their tongues, and made mounds of human skulls, all to inspire terror. (Halley's *Bible Handbook*, p. 209)

After their defeat, Israel was led out of Samaria and relocated to other lands. They were scattered, never to return to the home they had dwelt in for centuries. These descendants of Jacob would come to be known as "the lost tribes of Israel." However, history reveals that they would eventually migrate to Europe and that the descendants of Joseph would settle in Britain and later colonize America and the New World.

The southern kingdom of Judah would also fall at the hand of their enemy. They would be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean Empire over one hundred years after the fall of Israel. And although they, too, were led away captive, unlike Israel, the Jews would be allowed to return to Jerusalem by the decree of the great Persian king Cyrus. The nation of Israel today is for the most part the descendants of this southern kingdom of Judah, not the northern kingdom of Israel as some assume.

The scriptures reveal that both Israel and Judah will go through a great tribulation at the end time. Jesus indicated that this tribulation will be worse than any in human history, past or future (Mt. 24:21). His words confirm those recorded six hundred years earlier by Jeremiah (Jer. 30:7). If Jesus' words are true, the near future of the United States and Britain as well as that of modern day Israel will be very dark. These great nations will suffer unmercifully at the hands of their enemies and go into a captivity whose brutality will be unmatched by any in human history. It is interesting that today these three nations are so closely allied to each other while at the same time held in such low regard by the rest of the world.

Recently, a leading nationally syndicated radio personality made a very interesting observation regarding the Arab world's view of Israel and its loyalties to the West (United States). He said, "Arabs don't hate the United States because of their close ties to Israel. They hate Israel because of their close ties to the United States." The great prestige the United States once enjoyed throughout the world has seriously eroded. Today its enemies are brazen in their defiance and contempt of America.

A Warning to the Cynic

Those who believe it is inconceivable that the United States and the United Kingdom could be attacked and defeated in war do not fully appreciate the lessons of history. The world has known many great empires that once saw themselves as invincible. The Chaldean Empire dominated the world only to be conquered by a less sophisticated Medo-Persian kingdom. However, it, too, fell to the great armies of Greece, under the direction of Alexander the Great. Then there was Rome, whose influence extended to every corner of the known world.

Each of these empires dominated the earth and struck fear in the hearts of their enemies. But fear eventually became contempt, and today, these great empires reside in the ashes of history. Their demise began with the erosion of a moral and ethical underpinning. Each became complacent and even drunk with arrogance.

Great empires throughout history have crumbled because of political corruption and a national obsession with self-indulgence. Today, this is the story of the United States and Britain, and if it continues, it will be their epitaph. When reporting the horrific events taking place on September 11, Jeff Greenfield of ABC news said, "I hate to say it this way, but this may be the day when America's luck ran out."

Global Annihilation

When describing the last days, Jesus said that the tribulation inflicted upon this world would be so intense it would threaten the very survival of the planet. Notice His words.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. (Mt. 24:21-22)

The word "saved" in verse 22 is not referring to spiritual salvation, but rather physical survival. The Moffatt translation renders it "saved alive." The point Jesus was making was that His intervention in world events would be necessary for the survival of mankind and the planet.

Today, the possibility of global annihilation is not science fiction but rather science fact. It is a reality of which world leaders are very much aware. President Dwight Eisenhower once made a sobering observation regarding the days in which we now live. He said, "Science seems ready to confer upon us, as its final gift, the power to erase human life from this planet." The words of Jesus are a promise from God Almighty that He will not let this happen.

A Dark Picture

When describing the great tribulation that will come upon both the physical descendants of Israel and the remnant of His Church, God's word paints a very bleak picture. But it also explains why this judgment takes place. To those who wonder why a great and merciful God could so severely punish His people, or how He could allow the horrors of 9/11 to happen to a "Christian nation" such as the United States, read on. But prepare yourself for a painful truth.

Chapter IX

Where Was God?

Lord, in trouble have they visited thee,
they poured out a prayer when thy
chastening was upon them.

Isaiah 26:16

When the events of September 11 unfolded, there was tragedy everywhere. Great sadness filled the heart of every corner of America. But through the sorrow, stories involving tremendous acts of courage began to emerge. One such story involved the passengers and crew of United Airlines flight 93.

When these courageous men and women realized the gravity of what was taking place that day, they determined to re-take their hijacked aircraft. To many, what they did may have seemed futile. But to them it was the greatest of causes. They were freedom fighters in every sense of the word and this was their defining moment. Not because they sought it, but because it sought them.

These heroes knew all too well that the odds of winning this struggle were heavily stacked against them, but they were Americans, and on that day UA flight 93 was Valley Forge, Bunker Hill, and Normandy. Their fight was a gallant one filled with courage and is a source of inspiration to millions of people around the world.

Virtually everyone knows what happened on that flight. The plane would ultimately crash in a wooded area in southern Pennsylvania. Furthermore, the crash was so intense that the plane actually plunged fifty feet into the earth and was almost totally disintegrated.

A Great Sacrifice

The passengers and crew aboard that aircraft willingly gave the last precious moments of their lives in order to prevent further devastation. No one knows for sure where that plane was headed, but one thing is certain: the hijackers' plans concerning UA flight 93 were thwarted and people like Todd Beamer and Jeremy Glick earned the gratitude of a wounded nation, not to mention the killers' intended target.

A Final Prayer

During this fateful flight, several passengers made phone calls to loved ones and explained that their plane had been hijacked. It was during these calls that they learned of the horrible carnage being unleashed this day. One particular call has been relived countless times since 9/11. It was made by passenger Todd Beamer at 9:45 am, fifteen minutes before his plane would crash. Todd's last audible words, "Let's roll" have become a rallying call to America, and have been cited by many of its leaders, including president George Bush. But Todd said more than "let's roll" during this call. According to Lisa Jefferson, the air phone supervisor who spoke with and comforted him during his final minutes, Beamer recited the "Lord's Prayer," (Mt.6:9-13) as well as part of the 23rd Psalm. At one point when it appeared the plane was going down, he said, "Oh Jesus, Please help us!"

Todd Beamer was not the only one to invoke God's name during the final tragic moments of this flight. The last words Miss Jefferson would hear during that call were in the form of screams from the passengers and crew as they advanced toward the cockpit. In what she described as "an awful commotion," Miss Jefferson indicated that people were screaming, "Oh my God!" "God help us!" and "Help us, Jesus!"

Where was God when we needed Him?

Many have wondered why a supreme being, who has been described as so loving and merciful, would allow such a horrible and senseless day to happen. Even the evangelist Billy Graham struggled to understand 9/11 in light of God's great sovereignty. When speaking at a national prayer service following the attack on America, Dr. Graham made the following comment:

I have been asked hundreds of times in my life why God allows tragedy and suffering. I have to confess that I really do not know the answer totally, even to my own satisfaction.

Dr. Graham is not alone in his assessment of this horrible day. The vast majority of Americans, including its moral leaders, have been stunned by not only the clear presence of evil that immersed the nation that day, but also by what appears to be the total absence of deliverance from these events.

A God of Miracles

Certainly God could have prevented this devastation from taking place. After all, the Bible is filled with stories about great miracles of deliverance. There is Moses and the children of Israel marching through a parted Red Sea and being rescued from slaughter at the hand of Pharaoh's army (Ex 14). There's Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego standing in a blazing furnace and showing no effects of the flames (Dan. 3). Then there's the great prophet Daniel, who at over 90 years of age was put in a lion's den, only to wake up the next morning unscathed (Dan. 6). They were delivered. Why weren't the thousands of innocent people whose lives ended on 9/11 spared as well? Certainly it wasn't for a lack of prayer, was it? Virtually tens of millions of petitions to the Almighty were being uttered that day. Why didn't He answer them? Where was He? Where was God? And why would He let this death and destruction happen?

Was Jerry Falwell right?

Just days after the attack, Dr. Jerry Falwell, the pastor of the 22,000 member Thomas Road Baptist Church, appeared as a guest on the *Christian Broadcasting Network's "700 Club"* hosted by Pat Robertson. During this interview, Dr Falwell made the following observation regarding the horrible events of 9/11.

I know that I'll hear from them for this, but throwing God out successfully with the help of the federal court system, throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools. The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way - all of them who have tried to secularize America - I point the finger in their face and say, "You helped this happen!" (Jerry Falwell, 9/17/2001)

In response to these comments, Mr. Robertson offered his unqualified agreement.

Well, I totally concur, and the problem is we have adopted that agenda at the highest levels of our government. And so we're responsible as a free society for what the top people do. And, the top people, of course, is the court system. (Pat Robertson, 9/17/2001)

Later in the telecast, Mr Robertson offered a prayer that seemed to further reinforce Dr. Falwell's observation regarding the cause of 9/11.

We have sinned against Almighty God, at the highest level of our government, we've stuck our finger in your eye. The Supreme Court has insulted you over and over again, Lord. They've taken your Bible away from the schools. They've forbidden little children to pray. They've taken away the knowledge of God as best they can, and organizations

have come into court to take the knowledge of God out of the public square of America.
(Pat Robertson, 9/17/2001)

The Great Backlash

When news of this interview reached the secular world, the outcry was deafening. The opinions expressed by these two evangelists were attacked from every corner. Late night talk show hosts were relentless in their mocking of these men, and newspaper editorials decrying their comments began to proliferate. Even conservative commentators such as Bill O'Reilly, "The O'Reilly Factor," criticized Dr. Falwell's portrayal of God and offered his own assessment of how the Almighty looks at things. Some in the secular world even resorted to a kind of "counter attack." One writer referred to the "700 Club" as a "predator of human suffering," and Jerry Falwell as a "purveyor of liquid filth." Some even went so far as to argue that Dr. Falwell and Mr. Robertson were cut from the same cloth as the 19 terrorists that carried out the 9/11 attack on America. The following is one example.

The terrible tragedy that has befallen our nation, and indeed the entire global community, is the sad byproduct of fanaticism. It has its roots in the same fanaticism that enables people like Jerry Falwell to preach hate against those who do not think, live, or love in the exact same way he does. (Lori L. Jean, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force)

So strong was the backlash from this interview, that both Dr. Falwell and Mr. Robertson retreated somewhat on their statements. Mr. Robertson suggested that he was simply trying to be a "gracious host," when he offered his concurrence to Dr. Falwell, and that his expression of agreement was with respect to Dr. Falwell's remark, "I'll hear from them on this," not the actual comments that followed. Meanwhile, when speaking to CNN, Dr. Falwell seemed to soften his tone by offering the following apology:

I would never blame any human being except the terrorists and if I left that impression with gays or lesbians or anyone else, I apologize.

A Cheap Shot

There are many that may view the comments made by Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson as blatantly insensitive and totally inappropriate. But were they? And just who was taking the "cheap shot"?

The attacks by those in the secular world against people who profess a belief in a higher moral authority, and more specifically, God and the Bible, are as mean-spirited and vitriolic as any hate speech ever uttered. Their attacks are almost always personal. And although they have the appearance of moral indignation, in reality they are absent of any enduring moral principles. In short, the "moral" arguments advanced by the secular world are at the very least disingenuous, if not dishonest altogether. The formula for their attack is very simple: express "moral" outrage or indignation toward someone for statements made or positions held that go contrary to their beliefs or practices. The irony here is that this is the very thing they condemn in others.

The next step is to question the "believer's" understanding of what is "right" and what is "wrong." The tone in almost all of these attacks is condemning. For the most part, the "believer" is viewed as an intolerant bigot deserving of hate. Some will even challenge the authority of the Bible as a credible moral work. After all, wasn't it written by a bunch of white males? And isn't it filled with teachings that demean women, condone slavery, and is totally intolerant of religious diversity? Sounds like it would fit in well with many of the beliefs held by the cowards that flew into the Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The Manipulation of the Truth

Those who advance attacks against people with strong religious convictions are, for the most part, indifferent toward the scriptures. They use the Bible like they would a reference book. They pick and

choose certain verses to support a particular argument, but in reality don't respect the Bible as a compelling moral authority. To them religion and the scriptures are a lot like art. Everyone can have an opinion on it and no one opinion is any better than another. Even God Himself has been relegated to "whatever you conceive Him to be." Why should it be any different with His word? As a result of this approach, the secular world's opinion concerning the scriptures runs the gamut from total foolishness to being outright vulgar and obscene.

Further, there are those who are so pretentious, they will actually pervert the clear meaning of God's word in an attempt to support their positions. For example: some who embrace a homosexual lifestyle will argue that Jesus was gay, or that David and his friend Jonathan (the son of King Saul) had a torrid homosexual relationship that lasted for several years. These beliefs are advanced despite the fact that there isn't a credible Bible scholar on earth that would draw such a conclusion. But once again, the Bible "is a lot like art."

Defining the Enemy

Another approach of the secular world is to demonize those who accept the Bible as the definitive statement on morality and the literal word of God Himself. Terms such as "extremist," "intolerant," and "hateful" are used prolifically to describe those who openly declare their faith. Further, these labels are spoken with such force, they take on the appearance of truth.

But the truth be known, those who sincerely believe the scriptures are anything but hateful, extreme, or intolerant. This is because the true Christian makes an important distinction between the sin and the sinner. While they may hate the sin, they have great hope for the sinner. In the secular world, no such distinction is made. If they don't like what you believe, they don't like you.

Two Differing Camps

The problem with arguments from these two camps is that they cannot be reconciled. This is because they come from two entirely different frames of reference. While a Christian recognizes God as the true Moral Authority in the universe, the secular world claims that distinction for themselves or the institutions they have erected. Additionally, in the secular world, all values are given the same moral weight. Nothing is better, only different. Therefore, nothing should be condemned, but rather understood and tolerated.

As a result of this thinking, every act of depravity can be manipulated to have a "moral" justification if one wishes. Sexual behavior, whether it be adultery, fornication, or homosexuality, is "moral" because it is done between "consenting adults." Pedophiles argue the "morality" of their conduct because it is done between "consenting human beings." Those who practice bestiality can also claim the "moral high ground" because their sexual expression is done between two "consenting living creatures." Here, "consent" determines the morality of an act, not the act itself. Imagine if this was the standard in the Garden of Eden. After all, Adam and Eve both consented to their sin.

When it comes to an issue like abortion, the moral standard is a person's "right to choose" for themselves what they will do to a living being residing within them. Here, a behavior is deemed "moral" because it is based on a person's proximity to the behavior. In other words, "the fetus is inside of me. That makes it mine. And I can do anything I want with what is mine. Who are you to judge?"

This approach to moral and ethical self-defense can work with any sin because, absent an all powerful Moral Authority, man gets to define for himself what is "good" and what is "evil." Even the 19 hijackers who orchestrated what was nothing less than mass murder, rationalized their act as "just" and "good."

Mercy vs. Judgment

Contrary to what many in the secular world may want to believe regarding the comments made by Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, these two evangelists were not preaching hate. Further, they were not pronouncing **their judgment** on America, but rather their understanding of what the scriptures reveal

regarding **God's judgment**. In other words what God would do under certain circumstances and how He deals with sin that goes unchecked.

These men know all too well what the Bible says about mercy and compassion. They are well aware that God's word declares that the unmerciful will not enter into His kingdom (Mt.18:23-35). But they also know that when God dispatched His prophets to the nations of Israel and Judah, they declared a very unpopular warning and were held in contempt for it by leaders and citizens alike. Why? Because their message exposed a people's sin for what it really was. Israel and Judah's reaction was typical. They condemned the messenger and asserted their own righteousness. Sound familiar?

The remarks by Dr. Falwell and Mr. Robertson were an appeal to a nation they believe is in grave danger. What they were saying was that if America does not come to grips with its moral and spiritual condition, then it should not expect a moral God to sustain it. If it wants to kick God out of the land He has so richly blessed, fine; just don't expect Him to be there when calamity strikes. Where is the hate in that?

Meanwhile, their detractors were not arguing what God would do (under certain circumstances). Frankly, they don't know and don't care. What they were doing was declaring what God should do, based on **their** "moral judgment." In a very real sense, those in the secular world, while condemning any who would judge them, engage in the most arrogant of judgments. The moral relativist places himself as the ultimate moral authority, and in effect has made himself God's judge.

Who is Right?

As the war between the secular "left" and the religious "right" continues, a fundamental question emerges.

Who is Correct?

First, a quick review of the positions. As was just mentioned, the Christian sees the God of the Bible as the great Moral Authority of the universe. His judgment isn't to be questioned, but rather to be sought and understood. On the other hand, the moral relativist is hostile to everything that questions man's prerogative to exercise his own moral judgments. But who is right? The answer to this question lies in the future, but its truth in the present.

If the God of the Bible is **not** the one true God, and the scriptures His inspired word, then the nod goes to the secular world. After all, someone has to decide what is right and what is wrong, what is moral and what is immoral, what is good and what is evil. Absent an all-powerful Creator, man is the logical choice to preside over this responsibility.

However, if the God revealed in the scriptures **is** the one and only true God, and the Bible His divinely inspired truth, then the United States, as well as the rest of the world, needs to take serious stock of what it has done and where it is going.

The Great Moral Authority

The Bible states without ambiguity that man was never designed to be the moral authority in his own life. As difficult as this might be to believe, humanity simply does not have the proper equipment to navigate its moral and ethical path. King Solomon, a man regarded by many as the wisest person who ever lived, came to understand this truth. When writing the book of Proverbs, Solomon made a profound observation about man and the moral choices he makes.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death.
(Prov. 14:12)

Virtually all mankind has witnessed Solomon's words in action. We have seen good intentions play out to catastrophic results. Even Solomon's own life and the choices he made reflected this great moral law. In the western world today, there is a popular proverb that captures the sentiments of Solomon's words. It goes like this:

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions"

The point here is that despite how well intended man might be when it comes to making moral choices, the result is invariably the same - DISASTER.

Solomon was not the only one to draw the conclusion that man was incapable of successfully managing his ethical path. The great prophet Jeremiah also pondered man's qualifications to rightly preside over his moral decisions. He concluded that man could fall victim to his own moral and ethical devices. Notice his words.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer.17:9)

Here, Jeremiah is stating that man cannot trust his own judgment because the seat of that judgment (the heart) is not trustworthy. But there is more. King David, who the Bible describes as "a man after God's heart" (Acts 13:22), expressed a profound truth about man's inability to grasp "right" and "wrong."

Who can understand his own error? (Psa. 19:12)

The question David asked in this verse is rhetorical. The truth of the matter is that no one can understand his errors. That is why man makes so many. Man's capacity to navigate his moral path is nonexistent. Despite his assertions to the contrary, man was never designed to be the moral authority in his own life. The prophet Jeremiah conveyed this absolute truth in words that couldn't be more clear.

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walks to direct his own steps. (Jer. 10:23)

The words of Jeremiah state a truth that this world has rejected since the Garden of Eden. Simply put, man, left to his own moral devices, will choose the wrong path. Jesus Christ himself understood this absolute moral law—and His life reflected this understanding. The Bible states that when Jesus walked as a man on the earth, even He did not rely on his own wisdom. Notice His words:

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which has sent me. (Jn. 5:30)

The Bible asserts in the strongest of language that the Great God, who created the heavens and the earth and all things, stands as the one and only unimpeachable Moral Authority of the universe. It is He who decides what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil, what is just and what is unjust. The God of the Bible is infinitely wise, infinitely just, infinitely powerful, infinitely loving, and most infinitely MORAL. Man doesn't come close to "infinitely" in any of these areas.

An Unchangeable God

The issue that presents the greatest problem to those in the secular world, as well as those who profess a faith in the scriptures, is the fact that the God of the Bible never changes His moral positions. In other words, what He hated four thousand years ago, He hates today. The apostle James once described God as one in whom there is "no variableness nor shadow of turning" (James 1:17). With these words, James is stating that there isn't even a hint of movement with respect to God's moral compass. He doesn't change with the times. He is eternal. Time has no effect on Him.

However, man's moral compass is always in a state of flux because his values are constantly being influenced by the world around him - a world that is always changing. To illustrate this point, consider how

values have changed in the United States over the past 50 years. Our attitude about virtue and integrity are radically different than they were in prior generations. For example: can you imagine U.S. presidents such as Harry S. Truman or Dwight David Eisenhower using the argument "it depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is" to defend themselves against charges that they willfully lied to the American people?

Today our leaders play word games with the truth and are even smug about it. Is it any wonder that senior executives in the tobacco industry appearing before a senate investigation swore with a straight face that cigarettes are not addicting? But it doesn't end there.

Our opinions regarding sex, marriage, and family would have astonished earlier generations and nowhere is this more evident than in the United States. There once was a time when the vast majority of Americans navigated their lives around a fixed moral standard - a code of right and wrong. For most, this was the Bible. Stealing was wrong because God said, "You shall not steal." Lying was wrong because God said, "You shall not bear false witness." Killing broke the sixth commandment, and adultery the seventh.

If you were to read an early 20th century grammar school textbook, you would find numerous references to God, Christianity, and the Bible. And each was treated with great deference and respect. Today, however, our society demands that all moral standards constantly adjust their view to conform to society's conduct. As a result of this thinking, what we once thought was abhorrent moral behavior is now regarded as respectable and even virtuous.

Situationalizing Ethics

The great 19th century statesman, Daniel Webster once warned of "trifling with the injunction of morality" and the price the United States would have to pay for doing so.

"If we and our posterity shall live always in the fear of God and shall respect His commandments. We may have the highest hopes of the future fortunes of our country. But if we and our posterity neglect religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

Today, America appears to be hell bent on challenging Mr. Webster's observation—and nothing more graphically illustrates this fact than its view concerning personal virtue. The point here is that society now feels no compunction to manipulate their moral compass to accommodate their behavior. In other words, we no longer accept a fixed point of right and wrong—we don't even believe in right and wrong. This sad truth was expressed by a prominent American journalist who lamented how society had changed for the worse.

There was a time when Americans asked, 'Is it right or is it wrong?' Later we asked, 'Is it legal or is it illegal?' Today we ask, 'Can I get away with it or will I get caught?'

The result of this thinking can be seen in every strata of society. Students cheat in school without any sense of guilt. Adults cheat in business because "that's the way it is." Marketing firms cheat and advertisers are brazen in their misrepresentation of products. Politicians cheat in an attempt to influence elections. Clergymen cheat to control their flocks.

The morality of today claims to all who would hear: cheating is ok as long as you have a reason for it and you don't get caught. This is the same logic used by psychopaths, rapists, extortioners, drug pushers, and every other kind of lowlife our world has produced—and it possesses about the same moral weight. Sadly, this belief is embraced by an entire generation.

The great tragedy with society today is that it is not afraid to break with the moral conventions of prior generations. Conventions held as sacred because of their origin (the Bible). Today, we make our own

rules - define our own moral behavior and values. We are the masters of our own spiritual course. And where has it taken us? Has it made us better? Has it made us more just? One doesn't have to look hard for the answer to these questions.

An American Tragedy

In America's courtrooms, lawyers spin tales designed to confuse juries as opposed to present credible evidence. Some will even attempt to suppress information that may undermine their case, even though it would advance righteous judgment. And this is the "rule," not the "exception."

The Trial of the Century

Recently, America was captivated by what was referred to as "the trial of the century." The attorneys involved represented some of the best legal minds in the country. Those representing the defendant were even referred to as "The Dream Team." Throughout the trial, these very skilled and highly compensated legal minds, asserted to the jury, that they were on a quest for the truth. However, when being interviewed on a nationally syndicated television program, a member of this "team" was asked if the trial was really a "search for truth." He responded by saying, "If you want to search for truth, go to church. We search for doubt."

Throughout the trial, which had the atmosphere of a major sporting event, Americans were witness to a system of "justice" that represented an avalanche of deception, distortion, and misrepresentation as TRUTH. In its aftermath a murderer went free, a nation was divided even further, two children lost their mother, a family lost a son, and two savagely killed Americans were buried. So much for TRUTH.

Where is God?

As man continues to redefine his view of morality, his proximity to his Creator becomes more distant (Isa. 59:2). In short, the Great Creator and Governor of the Universe is no longer real, nor is His word. Today, God is some mystical thing that can be defined as anything you want Him to be. Oh, people will claim to believe in some "higher power," but when it comes to that power ruling their lives, that's where man draws the line.

The Bible reveals that in the beginning, God made man in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27). Today, man seems bent on returning the favor. Under this proposition, man can craft, in his own mind, a god that he is most comfortable with - a god that hates the things he hates, loves the things he loves, and believes the things he believes - a god who is just like him.

Too Busy for God

Although man seems content on guiding his own spiritual path, and hence creating his own god, occasionally circumstances arise that require more. Even nonbelievers will often call on the God of the Bible in times of great distress. September 11 is a good example. The problem with this is that our petitions are, for the most part, driven by a sense of urgency, as opposed to a sense of humility, or even a sense of curiosity and wonderment.

In a very real sense, we have become a society of users, even when it comes to prayer. We call out to God when He can do something for us. Otherwise, we just don't seem to have the time to speak to the King of Creation. After all, we're really very busy. Abraham Lincoln once made a chilling observation about an America that was too busy for God.

Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, **too proud to pray** to the God that made us." Abraham Lincoln

As a result of this arrogance, most Americans wander aimlessly through a life consumed with “the now” and blind to a profound truth that “you reap what you sow” (Gal. 6:7). In this world God is simply not real. He seems so far away. The tragedy is that when real trouble strikes, man feels that God has somehow abandoned him and not the other way around.

However, the sword of God’s unchangeable moral compass cuts both ways. Just as God is not buying the situational ethics pawned off as morality by the secular world, it’s not likely much of professing Christianity’s approach to the faith has gained His endorsement either. And surprisingly it is for the same reason.

Situational Christianity

The stark reality is that most professing Christians situationalize their ethics too. For example, many if not most of the traditions embraced by Protestants today have no Biblical basis, but rather come from beliefs that were carved out of human reasoning. For example, in an earlier chapter of this book, professing Christianity’s approach to the Sabbath and Holy Days were exposed as totally inconsistent with the scriptures. But it doesn’t end there.

Much of what is taken for granted in thousands of churches across the United States, and even the western world for that matter, is borne out of tradition, not the Bible. The truth is that when the scriptures do mention these traditions, they invariably take a position that goes contrary to the common practice. Consider just some of the beliefs and practices that are embraced by the overwhelming majority of the Protestant world, and ask yourself from where do these practices come?

- Why are some ministers referred to as “Reverend,” “Father,” or “His Holiness,” etc when the scriptures forbid it?
- Why do some ministers wear robes of varying styles when there is no evidence of such a practice in the New Testament?
- Why do most churches take up a collection every week when the scriptures specifically identify when offerings are to be taken?
- Why do some churches take the Passover (Communion) daily, others weekly, or even quarterly, when the scriptures clearly state it is to be taken annually?
- Why do some churches only give a wafer during “Communion” when the scriptures prescribe unleavened bread and wine?
- Why do differing denomination have different liturgies, when the scriptures provide specific guidelines for the conducting of church services?
- Why do some churches light candles and burn incense when there is no evidence of such a practice in the New Testament church?
- Why do some churches bless animals when there isn’t even a hint of Jesus or His disciples doing such a thing?
- Why do churches name themselves after Biblical personalities, locations, or events when all the churches of the New Testament were called ***the Church of God***?
- Why do most churches represent Jesus as having long hair when the Bible states that He couldn’t possibly have worn his hair that way?

- Why do some denominations require baptism by “sprinkling” when every baptism recorded in the Bible was done by immersion?
- Why do some denominations baptize infants despite the fact that there isn’t a single example in the Bible of such a practice?
- Why do some churches practice vicarious baptisms (baptism for the dead) when the scriptures strongly suggest that such a practice goes totally contrary to the process of conversion?
- Why do some churches include women in their ordained ministry when the Bible ordains that responsibility exclusively to men?
- Why do some churches require their ministry to refrain from marriage when the Bible actually warns believers to beware of those who engage in such a practice (celibacy)?

These are just a few of dozens of issues where professing Christianity holds a variety of views, many of which contradict each other and most of which contradict the scriptures. The fact is that although most professing Christians may not know it, the overwhelming majority of churches follow man-made traditions when worshiping the God of the Bible. In other words, **they have chosen to decide for themselves** how they will worship the one true and immutable God. The scriptures reveal that Jesus condemned this practice in His generation (Mk 7:7,13, Mt. 7:21-23). Why would anyone think He would accept it now? Perhaps the “believer” of today can be included among those in the secular world who think religion is a lot like “art.”

Sin Waxes Hot and Love Waxes Cold

When describing the last days, Jesus indicated that as sin, which is the breaking of God’s law (1Jn. 3:4), increased, love would dissipate (Mt. 24:12). The point He was making was that mankind would become so hostile to God’s law at the end time, compassion and a genuine outgoing concern for others would be almost nonexistent. As a result, acts of unspeakable cruelty would grow in both intensity and frequency.

The Big Question Regarding 9/11

With this in mind, is it possible to understand why God, whose position on morality never changes, may very well have withdrawn His protection from the United States on that tragic September day? Does the Bible identify a time in the past when the Great Creator withheld His protection from His people? As a matter of fact, it does—and the similarities between the nation of Israel thousands of years ago and United States today are striking!

A Lesson From the Past

Throughout the Old Testament, the nation of Israel played a prominent role in God’s plan. The scriptures reveal that the Eternal intended to use it as an example to all the earth of how a people can be rightly governed. Israel was to stand as a model nation - a nation under the direct authority of God Almighty - a nation with laws that reflected God’s wisdom and His justice. Imaging living in such a land - a land where God Himself was the architect of its government. The descendants of Jacob were given that opportunity.

However, the Bible also indicates that this great nation would be destroyed by its enemies and led away as captive slaves. All the prosperity and safety they had enjoyed as a real super-power would eventually evaporate and be replaced with untold suffering. The history of Israel reveals how such a catastrophe could happen—and more importantly, why God would let it happen. To best understand this extraordinary lesson, it is important to return to the birth of this nation God likened to His “bride” (Isa. 62:5).

The Birth of a Nation

Almost thirty five hundred years ago, the children of Israel were rescued from a horrible oppression inflicted on them by the nation of Egypt, who at that time was the premier super-power on earth. Shortly after this deliverance, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob entered into a special covenant with them. The terms of this covenant were quite simple. Israel was to obey all of God's instructions to them. In return, the Great Creator of the universe would physically bless them in a way that would set them apart from all the nations on earth. Additionally, God would be their personal protector, and as such, He would safeguard them from their enemies and even ensure that their enemies would be in fear of them.

A Covenant with Israel

God introduced the terms of His covenant by explaining that there was a very specific link between Israel's obedience and God's blessing. However, if Israel would obey their Deliverer, they would become the preeminent nation on earth.

And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that the Lord your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth. (Dt. 28:1)

This is an extraordinary promise. Here, the very God who led Israel out of Egypt, and in doing so, brought the mightiest nation on earth to its knees, was promising a collection of slaves that they were to become a nation to which all other nations would look up. He then outlined a series of blessings that would befall them if they obeyed. These blessings would include unmatched physical prosperity and growth - a prosperity that would be greatly desired by any nation on earth - then or now. Notice the promise God makes to the children of Israel **if they obey Him**.

And all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, if you shall hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your kine, and the flocks of your sheep. Blessed shall be your basket and your store. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. (Dt. 28:2-6)

With these words, God was explaining that if Israel would rely on Him and heed His words, they would live what could only be described as a "charmed life." Whatever they would do - and wherever they would do it - would turn out right.

God then promised Israel that although they would have enemies, those enemies would be scattered if they attempted to harm them.

The Lord shall cause your enemies that rise up against you to be smitten before your face: they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. (Dt. 28:7)

In the book of Leviticus, God indicated that Israel's military superiority would be so overwhelming, that they would be able to rout armies that outnumbered them 100 to one.

And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. (Lev. 26:8)

God continued outlining the terms of His covenant by reaffirming His promise of incredible physical blessings for Israel. He declared that their prosperity could be seen, even in their food reserves.

The Lord shall command the blessing upon you in your storehouses, and in all that you set your hand unto; and he shall bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you. (Dt. 28:8)

When God promised to bless “all that you set your hand to do,” He was declaring that He would even inspire Israel’s creative and technological efforts. In essence, God was saying that the great inventions and discoveries down through time would come through His people.

However, the Great Creator then reminded Israel that the tremendous relationship they were to enjoy with Him was predicated on their obedience. If they obeyed, the entire world would be in awe of them.

The Lord shall establish you as an holy people unto himself, as he has sworn unto you, if you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and walk in his ways.

And all the people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of you. (Dt. 28:9-10)

God then continued to present what can only be called the greatest “wish list” any nation on earth could ever construct. It included uncanny prosperity, tremendous natural resources, including their climate, as well as protection from their enemies. Imagine if a third world country today was presented with an opportunity to enter into such a covenant. Consider what they would be offered.

And the Lord shall make you plenteous in goods, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give you.

The Lord shall open unto you his good treasure, the heavens to give the rain unto your land in his season, and to bless all the work of your hand: and you shall lend unto many nations, and you shall not borrow.

And the Lord shall make you the head, and not the tail; and you shall be above only, and you shall not be beneath... (Dt. 28:11-13)

The Eternal also promised that if Israel would honor His words, they would enjoy a very unique and intimate relationship with Him.

And I will set my tabernacle among you, and my soul shall not abhor you.

And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people. (Lev. 26:11-12)

Imagine a nation being offered the opportunity to have the GREAT GOD of Heaven as its partner in whatever it endeavored to do. In the “arts,” He would be there. In the “sciences,” He would be there. In “labor and agriculture,” He would be there. In “research and technology,” He would be there. The all powerful, all knowing King of everything that exists would be an endless source of inspiration and the eternal force behind every blessing. With these words, the Governor of the universe was extending to the children of Israel the greatest package of national blessings ever assembled. Consider what God was promising them.

Israel would:

Multiply in population,
expand in territory,
thrive in labor and commerce, and
increase in wealth and prosperity.

Their defense would be the strongest,
their economy the richest,
their prestige would extend to every corner of the world,
and they would be the envy of all the nations on earth.

Their enemies would fear them,
their friends would respect them, and
their God would love them.

All of this in exchange for one thing: "OBEY MY VOICE." This offer by the Almighty looks like the greatest "no-brainer" in history. It is hard to imagine anyone contemplating it for more than a second. However, when examining the extraordinary prosperity God was offering, a question leaps out - one that begs to be answered.

Has a nation ever existed that was so blessed?
And does that nation exist today?

It is hard to imagine that any nation in human history more closely reflects those promises than the United States. This great land can stake claim to every one of them as no nation in human history can. It has enjoyed the greatest strength, the richest economy, the most extraordinary advances in science and industry. Its soil is the richest. Its natural resources the most abundant.

America has been seen by people around the world as a magical place. It is the home of freedom and opportunity. It has been called "The Land of Dreams" and has been the most coveted ticket in the history of immigration. For two centuries the United States has seemingly rolled the dice and they keep coming up "seven." This nation is truly a land of promise and the beneficiary of Divine gifts. Abraham Lincoln certainly thought so. Notice his words:

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown.

However, President Lincoln was also deeply concerned about a sense of national arrogance that would make the terrible mistake of thinking that its prominence among the nations of the world was the result of its own personal skill and talent.

But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

Shame on America

This is the story of America in the twenty-first century. Because of our unmitigated gall and arrogance, we now believe that the great prosperity and freedoms we have enjoyed for over two centuries are somehow the product of American ingenuity and "Yankee know-how," not Divine blessings. The great American patriot and president, Thomas Jefferson, warned of such thinking. His bold words stand as an

indictment against the America of today. What high school history textbook in the entire country would have the courage to preserve such a statement?

God who gave us life gave us liberty. And can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people, that these liberties are a gift of God?

Today in the United States a great movement has emerged dedicated to proving Thomas Jefferson wrong. Through it, every attempt is being made to expunge the knowledge of the God of Heaven out of our national landscape. The architects of this movement have tried to redefine America as a nation founded on the principle that faith and government are mortal enemies. They attack those who believe faith is a fundamental partner of our government as “religious fanatics” attempting to build a theocracy.

An America Lost

Today in the United States any public expression of faith, especially Christianity, is viewed as a threat to our freedom. The irony to this is that America was once proud to express its belief in the God of the Bible. Consider just a few examples: John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States, thought nothing of expressing his thoughts concerning the value of the scriptures.

It has been my custom for many years to read the Bible in its entirety once a year.

He was not alone in this sentiment. Theodore Roosevelt stated that he saw more value in the wisdom expressed in God’s word than that taught in America’s great academies and universities.

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.

Daniel Webster saw a link between following the word of God and national prosperity.

If we abide by the principles taught by the Bible, our country will go on prospering.

Abraham Lincoln acknowledged that Jesus Christ was the Savior of the world and that the Bible was a gift from God Himself.

I believe the Bible is the best gift that God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book. I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had no where else to go.

Presidents such as George Washington, Andrew Jackson, and Calvin Coolidge all saw an inextricable connection between a workable government and obedience to the Bible.

“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.” George Washington

“The Bible is the rock on which our republic rests.” Andrew Jackson

“The foundation of our society and our government rest so much on the teachings of the Bible that it would be difficult to support them if faith in these teachings would cease to be practically universal in our country.” Calvin Coolidge

These words express a fundamental principle as powerful as the law of gravity - without God and His word, what goes up **will** come down. God Himself expressed this truth to the infant nation He had recently delivered from bondage.

The Consequences of Disobedience

After outlining the unimaginable blessings He would bestow on Israel in consideration of their obedience, God explained the consequences of disobedience. He did this because of His extraordinary fairness and love. Love, because by explaining the penalties for rebellion, God was discouraging the very behavior that would go totally contrary to Israel's true happiness. The Almighty begins by returning to His great moral code and explains that just as obedience to His law brings blessings, disobedience will bring "curses."

But it shall come to pass, if you will not hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day; that all these curses shall come upon you, and overtake you: (Dt. 28:15)

Through His servant Moses, the Eternal then described a state in which no nation wants to find itself. The consequences for disobeying are truly catastrophic. As a result of rebelling against God and His law, wealth will turn to poverty, strength to weakness, fame to contempt, and hope to despair. Further, there would be no place in all the land that would be exempt from punishment. Whether it was commerce and industry in the city or agriculture in the country, everything will fail.

Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field (Dt. 28:16)

The Great God who provided for and sustained Israel then explained that if His people rebelled against Him, prosperity would be a thing of the past. None of the great abundance they knew would be left - only empty storehouses. No matter where or when they looked, the only thing they would see would be NOTHING.

Cursed shall be your basket and your store.

Cursed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your land, and the increase of your kine, and the flocks of your sheep.

Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. (Dt. 28:17-19)

But God wasn't finished teaching His people about the law of cause and effect. He continued to contrast the benefits of obedience with the consequences of rebellion.

No More Inspiration

When God outlined the blessings He would give to Israel if they obeyed, He said that He would actually inspire their creative efforts - everything they put their hand to would prosper (Dt. 28:8). However, God now explains that if Israel refuses to obey Him, all the breaks would go the other way. Abundance would be replaced with austerity—and everywhere there would be nothing but contempt for a people that was once so great.

The Lord shall send upon you cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that you set thine hand to do, until you be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of your doings, whereby you hast forsaken me. (Dt. 28:20)

Once again, God returns to a recurring theme of obedience to Him. Not because He is some kind of egomaniacal monster, but because He is a loving God who wants His people to grow and prosper. His warning regarding the consequences of rebellion was intended to serve as a deterrent to His people from sinning. That deterrent would also include the removal of physical health and healing.

None of These Diseases

Shortly after leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, God promised to spare them from the horrible plagues He had brought upon the Egyptians. However, once again, this promise was predicated on Israel's obedience.

...If you will diligently harken to the voice of the Lord your God, and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that heals you. (Ex.15:26)

God would later say that he would fill Israel with health and remove diseases from their midst (Ex. 23:25) and even give those diseases to their enemies (Dt. 7:15).

God My Healer

The Bible reveals that one of God's names is *Yhvh Ropheka* (God my Healer), and as such He truly does have power over man's health. And why shouldn't He? After all, God made man. Every molecule that comprises the genetic code of each human being works in accordance with laws He has ordained. In truth, the ALMIGHTY is the best equipped Being in the universe to protect man from the ravages of disease. In the New Testament, Jesus even likened himself to a physician (Mt. 9:12). The point here is that God can bestow the blessing of health on a nation or withhold that blessing from them. This fact was affirmed by Him when He indicated that if Israel rebelled against Him or His law, He would withhold His protection from diseases, and instead bring plagues upon them.

The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto you, until it has consumed you from off the land, whither you go to possess it.

The Lord shall smite you with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue you until thou perish.(Dt. 28:21-22)

God went on to say that even mental illness would afflict this people he had so richly blessed. The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart:

And you shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways: and you shall be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save you. (Dt. 28:28-29)

It is important to understand that God does not do this because He is some great bully in the sky. He is not simply trying to "rough up" people who are defenseless. The Bible reveals that God derives no pleasure out of human suffering (Ezk. 33:11). On the contrary, it causes Him great anguish. What God is doing is explaining to those whom He has created, that they need him. In that regard, man is like an infant in the care of a loving parent. Every young child relies on that parent for sustenance - the essentials of life. This includes their food, clothing, shelter and protection, as well as LOVE and MORAL GUIDENCE.

Today, man doesn't believe he needs God for anything. By withholding His blessings, the Almighty is teaching His people - and the whole world for that matter - that man without the true God is like a child without a loving parent.

The Weather Shall Betray You

When God revealed the great blessings He would bestow on Israel if they obeyed His commandments, He included a climate that would be conducive to abundant crop production (Dt. 28:12). Like all of the creation, the weather is also subject to the God of Heaven. As such, it does what He commands it to do. Throughout the scriptures, God has used weather to demonstrate His strength. In the days of Noah, He

commanded the heavens to open and release a relentless rain upon the earth (Gen.7). In the days of Elijah the prophet, God sealed up the heavens, causing a great drought (I Ki. 18:1, Jas. 5:17). The book of Zechariah reveals that God will even employ the weather during the millennium to correct the nation of Egypt and encourage them to keep His Holy Days, specifically The Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16-18).

When describing to Israel the consequences of disobedience, God includes adverse weather - a weather that would not sustain crops. This is clearly one of the devices the Creator can use to radically change the prosperity of a nation, and God said He was prepared to do just that.

And the heaven that is over your head shall be brass, and the earth that is under you shall be iron.

The Lord shall make the rain of your land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon you, until you be destroyed. (Dt. 28:23-24)

As a result of a massive depletion of rain, as well as an incursion of insects, crops will fail, and agricultural production will be a thing of the past.

You shall carry much seed out into the field, and shall gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it.

You shall plant vineyards, and dress them, but shall neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them.

You shall have olive trees throughout all your coasts, but you shall not anoint thyself with the oil; for your olive shall cast its fruit. (Dt.28:38-40)

A Brief Review

So far, God has explained to the children of Israel that if they obey Him, they will be the recipients of unimaginable blessings. However, He also described the consequences for refusing to obey. These consequences include great poverty and sickness as well as the depletion of natural resources and a favorable climate. He now explains that Israel will experience first hand, the utter destruction and humiliation of defeat in war.

National Security Will be Decimated

When God established the nation of Israel, He knew it would have enemies. But He also knew that He could provide them with the greatest security network on earth. God assured the Israelites that they would receive that protection if they obeyed.

Now, in the interest of fairness, God explains what Israel's defenses would look like without Him, and it is not a pleasant sight. The great strength they would enjoy as a superpower would be so depleted they would actually be turned to flight by enemies who were radically inferior to them. God began by indicating that He would break the pride of Israel's power (Lev. 26:19). As a result, what lay before them would be inconceivable.

The Lord shall cause you to be smitten before your enemies: you shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. (Dt.28:25)

So complete would be the destruction of a nation bent on rebelling against God, that it would be driven out of its own land and led away captive.

The Lord shall bring you, and your king which you shall set over yourself, unto a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known; and there shall you serve other gods, wood and stone.

And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations wither the Lord shall lead you. (Dt. 28:36-37)

When describing the utter destruction of Israel, God said it would be perpetrated by an enemy that had a ferocious contempt for everything about this once-blessed nation. Further, this enemy would show absolutely no mercy on their captives. They would only despise them, whether young or old.

The Lord shall bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies; a nation whose tongue you shall not understand;

A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor unto the young:

And he shall eat the fruit of your cattle, and the fruit of your land, until you be destroyed: which also shall not leave you either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of your kine, or flocks of your sheep, until he has destroyed you.

And he shall besiege you in all your gates, until your high and fenced walls come down, wherein you trusted, throughout all your land: and he shall besiege you in all your gates throughout all your land, which the Lord your God has given thee. (Dt. 28:49-52)

Great Humiliation and Injustice

It is hard to imagine that things could get worse for a nation committed to walking totally contrary to the God who raised them up - but worse it will get. God then declared that if Israel rebelled against Him and His law, they would suffer unbelievable humiliation and injustice. This humiliation will come at the hands of their enemies.

You shall betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: you shall build a house, and you shall not dwell therein: you shall plant a vineyard, and shall not gather the grapes thereof.

Your ox shall be slain before your eyes, and you shall not eat thereof: your ass shall be violently taken away from before your face, and shall not be restored to you; your sheep shall be given unto your enemies, and you shall have none to rescue them.

Your sons and your daughters shall be given unto another people, and your eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in your hand.

The fruit of your land, and all your labors, shall a nation which you know not eat up; and you shall be only oppressed and crushed always:

So that you shall be mad for the sight of your eyes which you shall see. (Dt. 28:30-34)

God also stated that because of Israel's refusal to walk in the way that He would direct, they would have to march to the orders of an enemy that would enslave them.

Because you served not the Lord your God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;

Therefore shall you serve your enemies which the Lord shall send against you, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon your neck, until he has destroyed you (Dt. 28:47-48)

The Ultimate Humiliation

In a very real sense, rebellion against God by a nation that once knew Him, is nothing less than an act of depravity. It stands as unimaginably foolish. It constitutes the height of arrogance, and God said it would be met with the ultimate of curses. The ravages of war can bring massive suffering on a people. In its wake there can be disease and almost always FAMINE. When explaining to Israel the consequences of rejecting His law, God described the gravity of the FAMINE they would experience. The words that follow illustrate where man will stoop, absent the protection of a great God.

When your enemies are besieging your towns, you will become so desperate for food that you will even eat the children that the Lord your God has given you.

Even the most refined man of noble birth will become so desperate during the siege that he will eat some of his own children because he has no other food.

He will not even give any to his brother or to the wife he loves or to any of his children who are left.

Even the most refined woman of noble birth, so rich that she has never had to walk anywhere, will behave in the same way. When the enemy besieges her town, she will become so desperate for food that she will secretly eat her newborn child and the afterbirth as well.

She will not share them with the husband she loves or any of her children. (Dt. 28:53-57
Today's English Version)

Why Would God Punish His People?

Throughout this covenant, God reminded Israel that His blessings would be showered down upon them like a gentle rain. However, that rain would cease, and curses would appear, if Israel elected to walk contrary to God's law.

Moreover all these curses shall come upon you, and shall pursue you, and overtake you, till you be destroyed; because you hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded you:

And they shall be upon you for a sign and for a wonder, and upon your seed for ever. (Dt. 28:35-46)

These verses reveal a great honesty about the God of the Bible. There is nothing subtle about His words. They are clear and direct. They outline a very specific formula for tapping into the wisdom, wealth, and strength of Almighty God. But they also reveal that God is not interested in His people taking Him for a "test drive" before they buy. And why should he be? Israel saw firsthand that God could deliver on His promise. The problem was that Israel couldn't deliver on theirs.

The law God gave to the children of Israel fills the pages of the books of Moses (the first five books of the Bible). Here, God provides His wisdom regarding the great moral and ethical questions man faces to this very day. If any society would open that book and commit to honoring the wisdom of *The Holy One of Israel*, they would be the beneficiaries of promises that are as timeless as the God who gave them.

Tragically, Israel rebelled and they suffered horribly for it. There is little doubt that this once - great nation must have wondered where God was as the armies of its enemies advanced toward them. When

destruction seems so imminent and so VAST, it's very easy to ask the question that must also have been on the lips of millions of Americans on September 11.

Where Was God?

The answer to this question may be too simple for many Americans to believe. The great God of the universe was where He has always been. In the third Heaven where His will is performed continually. In that kingdom there is only peace and abundance. The real question is: Where were we? And why have a people so richly blessed been persuaded to reject its only hope and in essence, go it alone. This route has been traveled before, and its streets are only paved with misery.

Those who think the idea of "blessings" and "cursings" is inconsistent with their understanding of a God of love, should ask themselves what this world would look like if there were no consequences for evil. Further, those who believe that God is like some genie in a lamp, or a jolly old fat man who brings people presents once a year, cannot grasp that God is a loving parent who is fully capable of disciplining His children.

Does God discipline? Consider some absolute truths about the God of the Bible that are routinely rejected by so many who think of the Almighty as simply a nice old man who just wants to be liked. Included in this list are facts about the United States that reflect an attitude of defiance toward the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Fact I

God is perfectly capable of rendering His judgment against nations. He did so to both Israel and Judah over twenty five hundred years ago. The result was enslavement

It is true that God is merciful and patient, but He isn't foolish; and He isn't one to be mocked (Ga.6:7). God created the laws of cause and effect - the laws of blessings and cursings. When speaking to the nation of Israel, He reminded them that sin brings with it a real penalty. Additionally, He informed them that sin is not something that can be hidden. Eventually every sin will be exposed and will in turn expose the sinner.

But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.(Num. 32:23)

Fact II

Throughout history, God has used other nations to execute His judgment. He used Assyria to punish Israel and Babylon to punish Judah. Each of these nations (Israel and Judah) were ripped from their land and led away into a humiliating captivity. At that time, families were separated, children were slaughtered, and their wealth stolen - just as God had predicted.

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. (Isa.10:5-6)

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that Israel and Judah were stripped of the great liberty they had because they rejected the very God who gave them their freedom in the first place. As inconceivable as it may seem, this people laid waste the great moral code of the most morally pure BEING in existence. They despised His judgments and polluted His Sabbaths (Ezk. 20:24). As a result of this defiance, God gave them over to a nation whose laws were not "good", "just", or "moral" (Ezk. 20:25).

Fact III

Today the United States is less connected to a legitimate moral compass than at any time in its history. We wink at promiscuity if it is “consensual.” As if adultery, fornication, homosexuality, or any other perversion possesses even an ounce of virtue because the participants agree. Adam and Eve mutually agreed to eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. How impressed was God with their unity?

Today we struggle with these issues but refuse to accept the only real truth concerning what they truly are. We can re-define these conditions as “harmless” or even “virtuous” if we wish. What we somehow can’t seem to understand is that they are dangerous.

Additionally, leaders in professing Christianity have integrated into their faith festivals and beliefs that are nothing less than an insult to the God of heaven. Whether it is Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Christmas, Lent, All Saints Day, Saint Patrick’s Day, or Halloween, “believers” have been convinced that they can somehow find a way to do God one better when it comes to worshiping Him.

Those who think they can make evil good simply by declaring it so are in for a terrifying truth. The great prophet Isaiah was inspired to record that truth.

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink:

Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! (Isa. 5:20-23)

Now listen to what God says will befall those who mock Him with their judgments - those who have crafted their own standard of morality.

Therefore as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he has stretched forth his hand against them, and has smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. (Isa. 5:24-25)

God’s word emphatically declares that Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth with great POWER and GLORY (Rev. 19:11-15), and when he does, he will EXECUTE His JUDGMENT on the “ungodly” (Jude 15). There will be no mocking God’s law then.

Fact IV

The United States is more violent now than at any time in its history. Whether it’s talk of war, gangs, domestic violence, crime, recreation, or abortion, we have become a nation obsessed with blood. This obsession has driven a wedge between America and the God of Heaven.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to proclaim that Israel was estranged from its Creator because of their sins. And specifically mentioned were acts of violence.

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.

For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness. (Isa. 59:2-3)

If the United States and its people truly wish to be reconnected to a God who is perfectly capable of protecting it from great acts of violence, then perhaps they should stop engaging in such acts themselves. Americans can shout to the top of their lungs that they are “Pro Choice” if they wish. But the voice of the King of the Universe also thunders. And His words are clear: “CHOOSE LIFE” (Dt. 30:19).

Fact V

America is more secular than at any time in its history. God has been kicked out of our national discourse. No prayer in our schools. No “one nation under God” in our pledge. No **Ten Commandments** in our courts. Under the relentless prodding of secular humanism, we have ostensibly informed God “Don’t call us. We’ll call you.”

Here’s God’s answer and you would be well advised to read it several times.

Therefore will I number you to the sword, and you shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that herein I delighted not. (Isa.65:12)

Thomas Jefferson, a great American patriot and author of the Declaration of Independence, once offered a chilling warning regarding how God could deal with this nation. Notice his sobering words:

I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever.

Perhaps the greatest error this world has ever made in its history is a total misunderstanding that God is just. And His justice demands that sin either be punished or forgiven. If man refuses to repent and turn from sin, then there is only one option left.

A Powerful Indictment

The book of Isaiah contains one of the most powerful indictments ever leveled against a nation. It speaks of violence in its streets, corruption in its courts, evil proliferating at an unimaginable rate, and the total rejection of its Creator and Sustainer. It reveals how a great nation could fall out of favor with the God who made it great—and why God will not hear their cry when calamity strikes. This indictment exposes a society totally arrogant in its approach toward justice and brazen in its practice of sin. It then explains how a JUST GOD is going to deal with this nation. As you read these words, ask yourself if the sins of this people sound familiar.

For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

None calls for justice, nor any pleads for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

They hatch cockatrice’ eggs and weave the spider’s web: he that eats of their eggs dies, and that which is crushed breaks out into a viper.

Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.

Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.

The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goes therein shall know no peace.

Therefore is judgment far from us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.

We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men.

We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.

For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them;

In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

And judgment is turned away backward, and justice stands afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. (Isa. 59:3-14)

When describing the moral and ethical depravity of this nation, God stated that it would get so bad that if one of its citizens tried to repent and turn from sin, he could only do so at great personal risk.

Yea, truth fails; and he that departs from evil makes himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. (Isa 59:15)

What Will God Do to Such a People?

Contrary to what America may think, God is not blind--nor is He some distant concept residing in a far away place. God is VERY REAL and so is His law. Furthermore, that law is woven through the fabric of eternity. It reflects who God is and how He thinks. Here is the warning the Almighty conveys to every generation:

IF YOU BREAK MY LAW, MY LAW WILL BREAK YOU.

Today man is bent on challenging this principle. He has ostensibly called on God Almighty to either "put up or shut up." Here is how God is going to deliver.

Therefore hear now this, you that are given to pleasures, that dwell carelessly, that say in your heart, I am, and there is none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

But these two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon you in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of your enchantments.

For you have trusted in your wickedness: you have said, None seeth me. Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you; and you have said in your heart, I am, and there is none else beside me.

Therefore shall evil come upon you; you shall not know from whence it rises: and mischief shall fall upon you; you shall not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know. (Isa. 47:8-11)

This is the fate that awaits the nation that defies the very God who gave it so much. And this fate is ever so close.

The Last Days

When Jesus gave the *Olivet Prophecy*, He indicated that in the last days there would be incredible tribulation inflicted on God's people. He characterized this tribulation as unlike any in the history of the world (Mt. 24:21). At that time the prophetic nations of Israel and Judah will be on the wrong end of an incredibly merciless slaughter. The great tragedy is that this slaughter could be avoided. If the nation God has so richly blessed repented and turned to their Creator with prayer and fasting (Joel 2:12), He would hear them. And He would deliver them and would do what gives Him the greatest pleasure - He would BLESS them.

A Note to Billy Graham

The question of why a just God would allow human suffering must truly be a painful one to hear. This is because it is almost always asked at times of great hurt and anguish. But there is an answer to this question - one that offers a painful reality.

God allows horrible events like that of 9/11 and so many other tragedies because He wants man to know what the world would look like without Him as its guiding moral presence. This is not God's world. Man decided he did not need God's wisdom and virtue while living in a garden some 6000 years ago. There, man decided to determine for himself what was "good" and what was "evil." And he continues to assert that "right" to this very day.

As a result of man's judgment, the innocent will always suffer. There will always be poverty. Families will be ripped apart by divorce. Ignorance and superstition will corrupt man's great potential. Justice will be perverted. Snipers will kill at random. Children will be abducted from their homes and murdered. Sickness and disease will attack the weak. Tyrants will rule the earth. And fanatics will fly passenger jets into buildings.

Chapter X

A Signal and a Work

“A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword...”

Jeremiah 25:31

When giving the *Olivet Prophecy*, Jesus identified two defining events that must take place in the last days. The first will stand as a visible signal to His end-time Church to prepare to go to a place He specifically designated for their protection. The second represents a direct order to His end time servants regarding the work He requires of them. First, let us examine the signal.

When speaking of the last days, Jesus indicated that an event referred to as the “*abomination of desolation*” would occur and that when it did, His followers must take flight to a place He has chosen. Notice the urgency of His words.

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the house top not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. (Mt. 24:15-18)

This flight will begin with an evacuation of Jerusalem and its surrounding region by those who remained steadfast in their obedience to God and His law. Shortly after this exodus, God will dispatch an angel(s) who will supernaturally lead them to a place of protection where they will stay for 1260 days, or three and one half years (Rev. 12:6). This end-time exodus will be triggered by an event that was first prophesied while Judah was in captivity over twenty five hundred years ago.

The Abomination of Desolation

What is the “*abomination of desolation*” spoken of by Daniel the prophet? Most authorities believe this prophecy is dual in nature. In other words, it occurred in the past and will occur again in the future. The original *abomination of desolation* occurred in 167 B.C., when Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria profaned the temple by erecting in it a statue to Jupiter Olympus. He then sacrificed swine in the temple and made the practice of Judaism a capital offense. This event was prophesied by Daniel hundreds of years before it took place (Dan. 11:31).

But what is this future *abomination of desolation* referred to by Jesus? What event or events are to take place that will be a clear signal to God’s Church to flee Judea? There are two events the scriptures strongly suggest constitute the *abomination of desolation*. The first involves military forces occupying the city of Jerusalem. This is supported by Jesus’ own words. When speaking of the end time, Jesus warned that the *abomination of desolation* would be preceded by armies.

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. (Lk. 21:20-21)

The city of Jerusalem is the most contested place on earth. Today it is constantly in the cross hairs of warring factions fighting to possess it. Jerusalem is the most prominent city to both the Jewish and Christian people and, to a lesser extent, those who espouse the faith of Islam. It is interesting to note that

although Jerusalem is mentioned prolifically throughout the Bible, it is never mentioned in the Koran. Despite this fact the faith of Islam regards this city as one of its three most holy sites.

Recently, the fighting over Jerusalem has intensified to such a level that a lasting peace in this area seems to be nothing more than an illusion. Despite all attempts by world leaders to reach a compromise that will bring some form of peace to the Middle East, the violence continues and the death toll mounts.

Today, virtually all experts concede that the only hope for stability in this area is to dispatch an international peacekeeping force into the region. Many of these scenarios exclude the presence of the United States because of their close ties to Israel. Foreign armies in Jerusalem were once regarded as highly improbable. However, now it seems inevitable.

Jesus declared that once foreign armies encompass this great ancient city, His Church must be ready to quickly flee to a place He has prepared. There are many who simply do not believe in a literal place of safety (Zeph. 2:3); however, the scriptures not only describe it but state that all Christians should pray that they will be included among those who go there (Lk. 21:36).

The second aspect of the *abomination of desolation* involves the presence of a world leader who will command the respect of all the major governments on earth. Some have suggested that the "beast" described in the book of Revelation will be invited to establish his headquarters in Jerusalem and perhaps even in a rebuilt temple. Others believe this person may be a great religious leader (the false prophet). The thirteenth chapter of Revelation strongly suggests that both of these men will present an image of great virtue, but in reality their authority and strength comes from none other than Satan the devil.

Preach the Gospel

The second defining event that must take place in the last days involves a special mission God gives to His servants. When describing the time of the end, Jesus declared that a work would be done that was so important that without it the end would not come. Notice what Jesus said:

And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Mt. 24:14)

The gospel of the kingdom is something that links all the champions of the faith, from the Old Testament prophets to his end-time servants. It represents one of the great commissions Christ gave to His Church, and make no mistake about it, Jesus practiced what he preached.

Jesus and the Gospel

Two thousand years ago, when Jesus walked the countryside of Palestine, He preached a powerful message. It was a message about a kingdom – a kingdom that was going to come to this earth and a kingdom of which He would preside over as its Sovereign. Everything in His life was dedicated to advancing the cause of that kingdom; His birth, His teaching, His miracles, His parables, His life (both public and private) were all dedicated to advancing the cause of a kingdom He knew was going to come to this earth, and He knew He was going to bring it. He began His ministry proclaiming that message. The gospel of Mark indicates that when John the Baptist was cast into prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom and exhorting those who would hear to "repent."

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God... And saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel. (Mk. 1:14-15)

Notice what Jesus did not preach. He did not preach a prosperity gospel, a heath-and-wealth gospel, a you-deserve-to-get-rich gospel, or a you-deserve-it-now gospel. He did not preach gospel music or a trucker's gospel or a biker's gospel or a butcher's, baker's or candlestick maker's gospel for that matter. Jesus spoke of a real kingdom. He described its laws, its citizens, its territory, and its leaders.

Today, the overwhelming majority of “Christian evangelists” have made a “freak show” out of the gospel. They prance around on the stages of great auditoriums. They sob openly during their messages. Their services are a perfectly choreographed theatrical presentation. Many beckon their audience to “come and experience God’s healing power.” Some shout, and their audience shout back. Others speak in “tongues” and almost all will claim, “We’ve got the devil on the run!” The truth is that God Almighty does not hear their words, but He does smell them, and their work is a stench. These self-proclaimed servants of God are those who the scriptures say went forth but were not sent. The prophet Jeremiah called them “brutish” (Jer. 10:21), and their contribution to the cause of the kingdom is nil.

God’s word speaks prolifically about false ministers throughout the New Testament and warns every believer to beware of those who would subvert the truth. The apostle Paul repeatedly warned God’s Church to beware of those preaching another Jesus (2Cor. 11:4). He actually pronounced to the churches in Galatia a curse on anyone who would preach another gospel (Gal. 1:8-9). Peter not only dealt with men who were willing to pay for the power of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 8:19-22), but warned in an epistle that “there shall be false teachers... who bring in damnable heresies” (2Pet. 2:1). The apostle John warned Christians to “try the spirits whether they are of God... because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1Jn 4:1). See also Jude 3-4).

A Serious Message

When Jesus’ apostles went forth to preach the gospel, it was not a circus atmosphere. Their approach was not to put on a big show. These founding fathers of the New Testament Church gave their lives to proclaiming a truth that was anything but frivolous. They were serious men living in serious times, proclaiming a serious message. That message was a warning that God’s law is real and there are real consequences for breaking it. The gospel of the kingdom is an announcement that the government of God is going to be established on this earth under the direct supervision of Jesus Christ (Rev. 11:15) and His saints (Dan. 7:18, 21). It is a declaration that the Messiah will return to this world in great power and subdue the nations. At that time, the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6) will come as a the commander of a great army (Rev. 19:11-21). But before He returns, a warning message will be proclaimed.

The Gospel as a Witness

When Jesus spoke of the last days, He stated that the gospel would be preached as a “witness” (Mt. 24:14). The word “witness” in this verse is very interesting and reveals a profound truth concerning God’s end-time Church. This term comes from the Greek word *marturion*. It is a term that pertains to a judicial proceeding. *Marturion* is testimony based on evidence; in this case, the Decalogue or Ten Commandments. When Jesus uttered this word He was using it in a prosecutorial context. Here God’s law is held up as the standard, and mankind is indicted for its defiance.

The scriptures make it absolutely clear that God’s end-time Church is the instrument He uses to show His people their sins and exhort them to repent. When speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God commissions His servants to powerfully proclaim this witness. Notice what God says.

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. (Isa. 58:1)

Isaiah is not the only one God uses to exhort His servants to proclaim a warning message. The second chapter of the book of Joel describes the very last days of man’s reign on the earth. At that time an invincible army will rout the armies of this world and seize control of the planet. However, before this takes place, God directs His servants to proclaim a warning.

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand... (Joel 2:1).

A Warning to His Watchmen

So important is the proclaiming of the gospel as a witness that God specifically stated He would hold His servants personally responsible if they failed in this charge. Using the prophet Ezekiel, God warned that although destruction will come upon those who refuse to heed His word, a warning message would be delivered. If His servants failed to issue that warning, the blood of those destroyed would be on their hands. Notice what God says.

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. (Ezk. 33:1-5)

BUT WHAT IF THE WATCHMAN DOESN'T WARN?

But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. (Ezk. 33:6-9)

Here God uses the strongest of words when instructing His servants regarding their responsibility to preach the gospel as a WITNESS. In short, God is saying "IT IS YOUR DUTY! And you will be judged according to how you carry that duty out."

This is not the only time God used Ezekiel to warn His servants concerning the great responsibility they have as watchmen. In an earlier chapter, this great prophet recorded the following:

When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou give him not warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul. (Ezk. 3:18-21)

Some have suggested that the words of Ezekiel pertain to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and do not represent an end-time prophecy. But this could not possibly be true. Ezekiel's warning was written over one hundred years after Israel had been routed by Assyria and led away captive. This being the case, there is only one possibility concerning Ezekiel's words—they are a warning of a future captivity. One that will come upon prophetic Israel in the last days. And God's instructions are to His "watchmen" living at that time.

Chapter XI

Is the Work Finished?

“Now, you son of man, wilt you judge?
Yea, you shall show her all her abominations.”

Ezekiel 22:2

There are some who believe that the commission to preach the gospel as a witness is finished and that God's servants must now prepare the Church for the return of Jesus Christ. To be sure, God's Church must make herself ready (Rev. 19:7-8). But how does she do this? The Bible strongly suggests that preaching the gospel is one way the Church (bride) prepares for her role in God's kingdom. In a very real sense, it is part of the training she must go through in preparation for positions of great leadership she will assume when Jesus Christ establishes God's government on earth.

Preparing the Bride

The scriptures reveal that the saints will serve as kings and priests in God's millennial kingdom (Rev. 5:10). In that role they will be responsible for teaching God's law and His plan to a world that does not know Him. In a very real sense that is exactly what the preaching of the gospel is. It is declaring the great hope of God's kingdom to a world held captive by ignorance. The true gospel points to a great destiny God has for man and how that destiny will be accomplished. It is hard to imagine that any true believer would think such a message would be extinguished.

Despite this fact, a great number of Bible believing Christians are convinced that the commission to preach the gospel is over. Many hold to this belief based on one or both of two misunderstandings of scripture. The first is that the Bible speaks of a “famine of the word” in the last days (Amos 8:11). In other words, the preaching of God's truth will cease. The second belief is that only an apostle has the authority to preach the gospel and absent such a man the preaching must stop. Let us examine both of these points.

A FAMINE OF THE WORD

When speaking through the prophet Amos, God declared that the time would come when He would bring a special famine upon the land. Notice what Amos writes:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. (Amos 8:11)

Why would God do such a thing? Why would He withhold His word at the end time? And does this mean that an Ezekiel warning will cease to be proclaimed at some point? These are very important questions and God's word answers every one them. Lets begin by putting Amos 8:11 in context.

In Amos chapter eight God is leveling an indictment against Israel for their rebellion against Him. He declares that their evil works have not gone unseen and that there will be a reckoning. This punishment will take place when the descendants of Joseph go into a horrible captivity much the same as that experienced by the northern kingdom of Israel over 2700 years ago. As was mentioned earlier, this captivity is referred to as a “great tribulation” or “Jacob's trouble.” When this tribulation comes, God's Church will be in a special place He designates. In this place of safety it will be protected from the great dragon and his agents. At that time prophetic Israel will be deprived of any access to the great truth preached by God's servants.

The Two-Fold Commission

To better grasp this point, it is necessary to understand the two-fold commission Jesus gave to His Church through His disciples. The first commission was to preach the gospel as a witness (Mt. 24:14). The second commission was to “**feed**” God’s sheep (Jn. 21:15-17). This food is provided through sermons and Bible studies given by God’s ministers on His Sabbath and Holy Days. It is also provided via literature designed to edify the body (Church). Many people who are not a part of the body benefit from this instruction. Thousands have attended church services although they were never converted. Millions have read booklets and magazines published by God’s true servants. The time is coming however, when the last message will be preached and the last booklet produced. At that time, the world will no longer have access to this nourishment—thus a famine.

This famine, however, does not include the termination of an Ezekiel warning (the first commission), and the scriptures bear this out. The eleventh chapter of Revelation describes two witnesses who will testify against the earth during the time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Rev. 11:3-6). This alone proves that an Ezekiel warning will continue after God’s Church is taken to a place of safety. But there is more.

A Warning Never Ceases

The history of God’s work from the very beginning emphatically declares that a warning message never ceases until God executes His judgment. Consider some of the great defining moments in history and the role of a warning witness in each.

- A warning message was preached by Noah to a depraved world until the day he entered into the ark.
- A warning message was preached by Moses to Pharaoh until the day Israel left Egypt.
- A warning message was preached by Jeremiah to the nation of Judah while Nebuchadnezzar himself was mobilizing his troops to invade Jerusalem.
- A warning message was preached by the prophets of God until their last breath.
- A warning message was preached by Jesus Christ even while He was being led away to His death.
- A warning message has been preached down through the ages without ceasing.
- A warning message will be preached by His end-time Church until it flees.
- A warning message will be preached by two witnesses until they are murdered.

BUT IT DOESN'T END THERE

The book of Revelation indicates that even after His two witnesses are murdered (Rev. 11:3-7), God takes steps to ensure that an Ezekiel warning does not cease. He will accomplish this by engaging supernatural forces to continue this witness. Notice what the apostle John records when describing this event.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Rev. 14:6-7)

Notice this angelic being is still appealing to mankind to turn from his way and to honor the Great Creator of the universe. Once again an Ezekiel warning continues.

Jesus Leaves a Work

Jesus was well aware of the great work that lay ahead of His servants and spoke of it often. In one particular example He gives an important lesson concerning the end time and the great commission to preach the gospel. This lesson which was given in the form of a “kingdom parable” was spoken just weeks before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. It is called the parable of *The Laborers in the Field* and it reveals the importance of God’s work at the very end.

In this lesson Jesus tells of a householder that searches out laborers to work in his vineyard and begins contracting them early in the day (Mt. 20:1). However, because of the size of the project it was necessary for him to seek out additional laborers (verses 3-5). The householder did this several times throughout the day (the third hour, sixth hour, and ninth hour). Even at the very end of the day (the eleventh hour), the householder is actively recruiting laborers for the harvest (verse 11). Once again, Jesus reveals a great need for a work to be done at the very end of the age. He then explains that the value of the laborers hired at the end was every bit as great as those hired at the beginning and their compensation reflected that truth (verses 8-16).

NOTE: There are many who see the “field” in this parable as referring to the Church and therefore believe Jesus is referring to preparing the bride for His Kingdom. However, in the parable of *The Wheat and the Tares*, Jesus defines “the field” as “the world” not the Church. (Mt 13:38) With this understanding, the parable of *The Laborers in the Field* refers to a work God’s Church will do in the world.

A Lesson from the Apostles

Those who believe that the commission to preach the gospel as a witness is finished should consider the lives of Jesus’ apostles. These champions of the faith comprise what are arguably the founding fathers of the New Testament Church. They dedicated their lives to proclaiming the great truth they were given by the Messiah. The scriptures reveal that an incredible destiny awaits these men because of their steadfast dedication to God’s kingdom. Jesus indicated they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk. 22:29-30). The book of Revelation states that their names will be on the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14). Suffice it to say these men will hold positions of great responsibility and trust in God’s Kingdom. But what does this have to do with preaching the gospel in the last days? The answer: PLENTY!

The apostles knew Jesus personally. They walked with Him. They ate with Him. They traveled with Him. They were taught directly by Him. They knew His message and they knew Him in ways that no others could. They understood Jesus perfectly when He commissioned them to go into all the world and proclaim God’s truth (Mt. 28:19-20).

Additionally, the apostles truly believed they were living in the last days. They believed Jesus would return in their generation. Driven by this understanding, these men gave their lives preaching the gospel of the kingdom. They were men on a mission. Furthermore, there isn’t a hint that at some point they planned to stop preaching the gospel. The book of Acts actually describes an event in which Peter and John are ordered by the religious leaders of their day to cease and desist preaching this message. Notice their answer.

But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to harken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. (Acts 4:19-20)

Peter and John as well as all of the apostles were steadfast in proclaiming God's word and no power on earth was going to stop them. With this in mind, if the apostles were alive today, what would they be doing? Simply waiting for Jesus to return? Hardly! Perhaps engaging in some self-improvement program so that they would be better executives in the kingdom? Once again, probably not. Or would they be doing the work Jesus left them to do? Would they be preaching the gospel to all the world as a witness?

The work Jesus left His apostles would punctuate every minute of their lives. These men would eat, drink, and sleep the gospel of the kingdom. To think otherwise goes contrary to all the properties of reason. These men gave their lives in God's service THEN and they would do no differently TODAY.

CAN ONLY AN APOSTLE PREACH THE GOSPEL?

There are some who believe that only an apostle can preach the gospel – that the commission to proclaim an Ezekiel warning was only given to those who sit as the leader of His Church. This is simply not true. Some of the greatest champions in the Bible proclaimed a powerful gospel and were not apostles. Consider just a few examples.

Stephen stands as the first recorded martyr of the New Testament. This great servant of God was one of the most eloquent speakers in the history of God's Church. The scriptures describe him as "full of faith and power" (Acts 6:8). Stephen preached one of the most powerful messages ever recorded in scripture, and he paid for that message with his own blood (Acts 7). His bold words rang out as an indictment against the religious leaders of his day and he preached the gospel in a way that has all but disappeared today. This hero of the faith was not an apostle. But that did not stop him from declaring the good news of God's soon coming kingdom.

Philip was also a champion of the faith and an important instrument in preaching a message about the kingdom of God. The book of Acts chronicles a period when God's Church was suffering great persecution (Acts 8:1). At that time Philip went to Samaria and proclaimed the gospel. While he was there God gave him the power to cast out demons and heal the lame (Acts 8:7). His work was so compelling that "the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spoke" (Acts 8:6). Philip's zeal for the gospel stands as an example to all of God's end-time servants. Philip was not an apostle. However, that did not deter him from the great work God had given him.

Those who believe that only an apostle can preach the gospel should consider the first four books of the New Testament. Two were written by men who held no such position. Yet the words recorded by Mark and Luke speak with great force of a King and the kingdom he will establish on this earth.

The idea that only an apostle can preach the gospel is found nowhere in the scriptures. Further, this belief violates every tenant of reason. It makes about as much sense as seeing a building on fire and refusing to scream "fire!" because you're not a fireman.

Israel and the Gospel

The scriptures actually reveal that God doesn't even need a man to proclaim this message. In the Old Testament God used the entire nation of Israel to proclaim a great truth about His kingdom. Notice what Moses declares to the children of Israel in preparation to entering the promised land.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who has God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Dt. 4:5-8)

Here God declared that Israel was to stand as an example to all the world of what it is truly like to be one nation under God. In a very real sense, God raised up Israel to preach the gospel. But it doesn't end there.

The Heavens Declare the Gospel

When writing to the Church at Rome, the apostle Paul made an interesting observation regarding the physical realm. Paul wrote that the universe stood as incontrovertible proof that God is real. It also stands as an indicting witness against those who refuse to believe in a creator. Notice what Paul wrote.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse... (Rom. 1:20)

The Bible also indicates that the heavens play an important role in revealing who God is. King David of Israel, who authored many of the psalms, wrote "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psa.19:1), and to be sure, they do. The heavens speak prolifically of God's mercy (Psa. 36), His righteousness (Psa. 50:6), His redemption (Isa. 44:22-23), and even His eternal nature (Psa. 104). Mankind may have difficulty declaring God's greatness, but the heavens do it with joy.

From the very beginning, the great God had a purpose in creating the sun, moon, and stars. That purpose was more than simply to beautify the sky. The scriptures reveal that God fashioned the heavens as an instrument in declaring His plan of salvation. The first chapter of the book of Genesis describes the creation of the heavenly bodies and reveals something extraordinary about God as a planner. Notice what it says.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for **signs**, and for **seasons**, and for days, and years... (Gen. 1:14)

Here God declares that the astronomical bodies (the sun, moon, and stars) are for "signs" and "seasons." These two words have profound meaning and reveal an extraordinary point regarding God's commitment to preaching the gospel. The Hebrew word for "sign" in this verse is **owth**. This word can be translated as "a signal," "beacon," "evidence," or "a mark." It is the same word God used when describing His Sabbath. Notice what God says:

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a **sign** between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you... It is a **sign** between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. (Ex. 31:13, 17)

God created the Sabbath as a link between Himself and man. The Sabbath is a "sign" God gave that would enable man to know his Creator. God created the heavens as a clock in which the Sabbath could be determined. But there is more. The Hebrew word "seasons" in Genesis is **moed**. This word means "appointed times." God's appointed times are His Holy Days.

God's Holy Days reveal a great plan of salvation for all mankind. God knew that plan from the very beginning. He created the heavens as an instrument to point man toward Him. The heavens declare not only God's strength, but also His great wisdom and love. This exquisite part of the creation reveals that the great Creator is mindful of His children and will ultimately lead them to Himself. The heavens truly do preach the gospel.

Heavenly Signs

The scriptures also declare that the Almighty will use the heavens as an instrument of His wrath to punish a defiant world. They will literally convulse with His consent.

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (Rev. 6:12-14)

Additionally, Jesus Himself revealed that God would literally “shake the heavens” prior to His triumphant return to earth.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: (Mt. 24:29)

The point here is that every square inch of the creation is fully capable of proclaiming God’s power as well as His sovereignty over the universe—a fact that will be painfully obvious.

Chapter XII

Why an End Time Warning?

“Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not
be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and
the Lord hath not done it?”

Amos 3:6

The Bible states with absolute clarity that God’s servants will proclaim an Ezekiel warning during the last days and that a gospel will be preached as a witness until the return of Jesus Christ. That gospel is an appeal by God Almighty to a world held captive by sin. Through it God implores man to turn from evil and obey his Creator.

But why does God want this message preached? Why a warning? And why at a time when mankind will have fixed his will in defiance to Him? In other words, why would God want an Ezekiel warning preached when, by all indications, no one will heed it? The Bible answers these questions, and in doing so, reveals something extraordinary about our Creator and His attitude regarding the last days. In truth, God’s word is very specific concerning why it is so important to Him that an Ezekiel warning is preached at the very end. This reason is revealed in the words of two prophets.

A Lesson from Two Prophets

God’s approach toward proclaiming a warning is graphically illustrated throughout the scriptures. However, two minor prophets reveal an aspect of God’s character that demands He proclaim a warning prior to the execution of His judgment. The first of these prophets is Jonah.

The story of Jonah is famous in the scriptures. It has been told countless times to millions of children. But the book of Jonah is more than a child’s tale. It stands as a great declaration of God’s power and His virtue.

Jonah was a prophet of Israel who was commissioned by God to go to the great city of Nineveh and preach a warning. That warning called for the people of Nineveh to turn from evil or suffer the consequences. God indicated that this gentile people had 40 days to repent or He would bring destruction upon them (Jonah 3:4).

At this point it is important to understand something about this city. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the mortal enemy of Israel. It’s hard to imagine that Jonah could have wanted to do anything less than warn them about their impending destruction. But this is exactly what God directed him to do. According to the scriptures, once Jonah received God’s word regarding Nineveh, he tried to run away in an attempt to avoid proclaiming this warning (Jonah 1:2). However, God intervened (Jonah. 1:4-2:10), and Jonah reluctantly went and spoke God’s words.

As a result of this warning, Nineveh repented, and by order of the king, all its citizens fasted and appealed to God for His forgiveness (Jonah 3:5-9). God was so moved by this change of heart that He withheld His judgment: Nineveh was spared.

Regrettably, this act of mercy infuriated Jonah. Furthermore, the scriptures reveal that he voiced his complaint directly to God. Essentially what Jonah said was that he knew God would exercise His mercy on this pagan city and that is why he never wanted to go there in the first place. Jonah wanted Nineveh destroyed, not spared. And he was not shy in expressing his frustration at the way God handled the situation. Notice the words Jonah used when advancing his complaint.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that you are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repent you of the evil. (Jonah 4:1-2)

The word “evil” used by Jonah in this verse comes from the Hebrew word *ra*. This word has a variety of meanings, but in the context of this verse, it is clear what is intended. *Ra* is not referring to “sin” or “wickedness,” but rather to “distress,” “adversity,” or “calamity.” With the words “it repents you of the evil,” Jonah was saying that he knew God did not want to bring calamity upon the citizens of Nineveh, even though they were a people who worshiped false gods.

But what does this event, which took place over twenty five hundred years ago have to do with the preaching of an end-time gospel? The answer: PLENTY! And this answer is revealed in the words of a second prophet.

The prophet Joel wrote of a time that takes place at the very end of man’s reign on earth. It is a time that will see a great army led by Jesus Christ when He returns. At that time He will subdue all the nations. This army and the battle that ensues is described in the second chapter of Joel’s prophecy. Joel introduces this chapter with God’s instruction to “blow the horn in Zion and sound the alarm in my holy mountain” (Joel 2:1). This is clearly speaking of an Ezekiel warning. But there is more.

When describing this event which again will take place at the very end of man’s reign on this earth, God explains why a warning must be proclaimed. He does so by first appealing to mankind to repent and turn to Him. However, God then reveals a profound truth about His attitude concerning the great destruction that will take place. Notice what He says.

And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repents him of the evil. (Joel 2:13)

Here God uses the same words used by Jonah when Jonah criticized Him for sparing Nineveh. However, this time God uses them when describing the great devastation that is going to come upon the earth in the last days. God said it “repents Him of the evil.” In other words, it is God’s desire to not bring calamity upon mankind. This attitude of compassion is what truly defines who God is. God is a God of strength, but His greatest power is revealed in His mercy. This is a point that so few understand.

When speaking to the religious leaders of His day, Jesus said “Go and learn the meaning of the words I will have mercy and not sacrifice”(Mt. 9:13). The point Jesus was making was that mercy is an essential part of God’s character, and He desires greatly to demonstrate that quality.

A Merciful Warning

The importance of mercy and compassion cannot be overstated. Jesus characterized mercy as one the “weightier matters of the law” (Mt. 23:23) and indicated that without this quality man would never enter into God’s kingdom (Mark 11:26). God’s desire is that man repent in order to experience the great blessings He has in store for him. Additionally, it is God’s desire that all mankind would come to that repentance. Notice the words of the apostle Peter.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2Pet. 3:9)

Those who believe the commission to preach the gospel as a warning in the last days is finished do not fully understand what that gospel is. An Ezekiel warning not only announces the great depravity of man,

but also the great compassion of God. Those who proclaim this message do so because God wants man to know that He is a forgiving Father who cares greatly for those whom He has made in His own image.

God wants man to turn from sin, and because of this He will continue to make that appeal until the very end. In a very real sense, those who refuse to preach an Ezekiel warning are not unlike Jonah. Their actions deprive God of an opportunity to proclaim His love to His children. And just as He intervened with Jonah, God will intervene again, if necessary, to ensure a warning goes forth. Whether it is through a man, a Church, a nation, the heavens, or an angelic being, the great gospel of His kingdom will be proclaimed as a witness "and then shall the end come" (Mt. 24:14).

Chapter XIII

The Perfect Prophet

“So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

Isaiah 55:11

When Jesus gave the *Olivet Prophecy*, His words possessed great strength and precision. He was not simply analyzing the geopolitical landscape of the Roman world and offering a theory on how things might turn out. Jesus was not speculating about the future. He was not guessing about what the last days would be like. Jesus was speaking history in advance, and His message had pinpoint accuracy. To illustrate this point, consider the first words He spoke regarding the future of the temple.

“...There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.”
(Mt. 24:2)

With these words Jesus was predicting the total and absolute destruction of the most important structure in all of Judaism. Additionally, He made this announcement at a time when there wasn't a shred of evidence that such a catastrophic event would take place. But take place it did.

In 70 AD (forty years after Jesus' prediction), Titus and his Roman army arrived at the walls of Jerusalem on the day of the Passover. Upon their arrival, Roman soldiers fortified their position and built battering rams to be used against the great city. At this point, the siege on Jerusalem began. The Roman army numbered 30,000, while the Jews who opposed it numbered approximately 24,000.

According to the Roman historian Tacitus, Jerusalem was crowded with 600,000 visitors. After five months, the walls of the city were battered down. Additionally, the temple was gutted and burned. When writing about this event, the Jewish historian Josephus stated that the destruction of Jerusalem was so complete it looked like a site that had NEVER BEEN INHABITED.

How could Jesus have known this was going to happen? How could He be so certain that the Temple would be destroyed so completely? The answer to this question lies in who Jesus was.

The scriptures declare that Jesus was not only the Savior of the world who lived as a man two thousand years ago but was also the very God of the Old Testament – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was the One who spoke to Moses, inspired the prophets, and created the universe. When speaking to the great religious leaders of His day, Jesus said, “...before Abraham was, I Am” (Jn. 8:58). Here He was identifying himself the same way He did to Moses before sending him to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of bondage (Ex. 3:13-14). The gospel of John identified Jesus as the Word of God manifest in the flesh (Jn. 1:1-5). That Word has eternally existed and works in partnership with God the Father in governing the universe.

As the God of the Old Testament, Jesus made an extraordinary statement that identified Him as unique from all other beings. This uniqueness is reflected in His power to make pronouncements concerning the future. Notice what He says through the prophet Isaiah.

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure... (Isa. 46:9-10)

Here, Jesus Christ, as the God of the Old Testament, is saying that He is not only the Creator of the universe but also the Governor of its destiny. It is He who declares how the great story of God's plan will play out.

With this in mind, consider just some of the prophecies Jesus spoke either directly or through His servants concerning the end time:

- His Church would exist.
- It would be persecuted.
- It would preach a powerful gospel as a witness.
- There would be a great apostasy within the Church.
- A man of sin would arise.
- The sheep would be scattered.
- A confederation of nations will emerge in Europe under the leadership of a power known as the beast.
- Gentiles will encompass Jerusalem.
- There will be a famine of the hearing of the word.
- A great religious leader will proclaim that the beast is Christ.
- A mark will be issued which will identify those who have surrendered their will to the beast.
- God's people will be taken to a place of safety.
- Satan will pursue this people in an attempt to destroy them but will fail.
- Satan will then turn his wrath on those in God's Church who are left behind.
- Prophetic Israel will go into a horrible captivity.
- There will be a great persecution on the remnant of God's people, resulting in a great martyrdom.
- Two witnesses will emerge and do great miracles and testify against the earth.
- Two and a half years into the great tribulation, God will prepare to unleash His wrath through trumpet plagues.
- Before these plagues are unleashed, He will provide a special seal on the forehead of those He calls His servants.
- There will be silence in heaven for the space of about half an hour.
- Seven angels will be given seven trumpets which, when sounded, will rain down unimaginable devastation upon the inhabitants of the earth who have rejected Him.
- At the last trump, the dead in Christ shall be raised incorruptible and meet Him in the air.

- There will be a great wedding feast attended by the bride and Jesus Christ as well as a guest list that will read like a “Who’s Who in the Universe.”
- Seven angels will pour out seven last plagues from seven vials.
- Christ will return to earth with His saints.
- He will stand on the Mount of Olives.
- The Mount shall cleave in two.
- There will be a great battle.
- Satan will be bound for a thousand years.
- The beast and the false prophet will be destroyed.
- God’s millennial kingdom will be established.
- Peace will be restored under the leadership of Jesus Christ and the saints.
- At the conclusion of the millennium, a great resurrection will take place in which the billions who have never known God or His plan will be converted.
- Satan will be loosed for a little season.
- A final rebellion will be crushed.
- There will be a Great White Throne Judgment.
- God’s family will be permanently established and those who reject it will be permanently destroyed.
- There will be a new heaven and a new earth with the old passing away.

These are just a few of hundreds of events that are going to begin to happen in the next few years. God’s end-time servants are very much aware of these events and it is their calling to proclaim them with power and force.

Chapter XIV A Call to Action

“O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem... for evil appears out of the north, and great destruction.”

Jeremiah 6:1

The Great God of Heaven has given those whom He has called a glimpse into the most magnificent kingdom in the universe – a kingdom governed by mercy, judgment and faith (Mt. 23:23). It is a kingdom that will produce great peace, great prosperity, great health, and great hope. God gave this vision in part because He wants His servants to proclaim the good news of that kingdom. It is why He raised up a work. It is why He inspired and preserved the scriptures. It is why He reveals His plan to His servants. Notice the promise God makes regarding the end time and His servants.

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7)

Something to Think About

Why would God reveal His plan if it were to be kept secret? The plain truth is: He wouldn't. God is not playing games with mankind. The return of Jesus Christ and the events surrounding that return are not some magician's illusion. His return is very real and so is His warning. That warning shall go forth because God said it would.

The great God who created the heavens and the earth has raised up an end-time work to accomplish His purpose. That purpose includes the preaching of the gospel as a witness. To this end He directed His servants to “Cry aloud and spare not...” (Isa. 58:1), and He expects them to do just that (Ezk. 33:1-9). If God's servants don't proclaim the priceless truth reflected in the gospel, then **THEY ARE NOT WORTHY OF THAT TRUTH!** If His servants don't proclaim the great hope of God's kingdom, then **THEY ARE NOT WORTHY OF THAT KINGDOM.!**

When speaking about the fight against the former Soviet Union and communism, President Ronald Regan once said, “If not us, who? And if not now, when?” These words are just as applicable to God's end-time Church and the proclaiming of the gospel. If not us, who? And if not now, when?

Those who think God's servants can somehow keep silent and not proclaim a warning should think again. God believes in warnings. His end-time work is proof of that fact. And those who say the commission to preach the gospel is finished should carefully consider the words of Jesus Christ.

Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. (Mt. 24:46)

It Is Finished

Jesus Christ believed fervently in completing the work He was given during His life on earth. At the end of that life He uttered the words, “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). When doing so He was proclaiming that the work He was given by the Father was accomplished. This is a fact He acknowledged just hours before. It was after His last Passover. At that time Jesus and His disciples went to the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus poured out His heart in prayer to His Father. At the beginning of that prayer Jesus said, “I have finished the work which you gave me to do” (Jn. 17:4). He was able to say this because he respected so much the work He was given.

Early in His ministry Jesus uttered a profound truth about God's work and why it was so important. Notice His extraordinary words.

... for the works which the Father has given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. (Jn. 5:36)

It is no different with God's end-time Church. They have a work that bears witness of them—and they must be about their Father's business.

A Final Thought

What can be learned from the tragic events that rocked the most powerful nation on earth? In one moment, there was peace and in the next, destruction. At the very least, America learned that despite its tremendous military strength it is vulnerable. But is there another lesson? Is it possible that September 11 was a wake-up call to God's people - those whom He has instructed to watch and to warn?

God's true Church knows what lies ahead for the descendants of Joseph. They know the meaning of the words "Jacob's trouble." They know that as powerful as the great nations on earth are, if they don't repent, they will go into a horrible captivity and ultimately suffer God's judgment. This is the warning Jesus commanded His servants to preach. It is a warning to a depraved world to turn from sin and submit to Him.

This gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed as a witness because God is a great and merciful Father who wants with all His heart to forgive and to heal. And whether the nations of the earth listen or not, that gospel must be proclaimed. The apostle Paul recognized this early in his ministry. At that time, he was in Antioch during his first missionary journey. It was there that he gave a powerful message and concluded it with words from the prophet Habakkuk. These words are as appropriate today as they were when they were first uttered.

Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you. (Acts 13:40-41 NIV)

God's end-time Church is that "someone," and if the world doesn't believe, so be it. Even if some in God's Church don't believe, so be it. One thing is absolutely certain: they will never, ever, be able to say...

IT CAME WITHOUT WARNING

Appendix I

Timeline of Terror

Below is a timeline of significant events that took place on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. This timeline captures the enormity of this day and the scope of its impact on America. All times indicated are Eastern Standard Time

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### **6:30 A.M.**

U.S. President George Bush awakens in Sarasota, Florida, and goes for a four mile run. This morning he plans to visit Emma Booker Elementary School where he will read to children and emphasize the importance of reading and education. After his visit, he is scheduled to return to the capital.

### **7:59 A.M.**

American Airlines Flight 11, a Boeing 767, takes off from Boston's Logan International Airport with 76 passengers, 11 crew members, and five terrorists on board. Its scheduled destination is Los Angeles. In less than 50 minutes every one on this flight will die. This will be the first plane to crash into the Trade Center.

### **8:14 A.M.**

United Airlines Flight 175, also a Boeing 767, takes off from Logan International Airport in route to Los Angeles. On board are 51 passengers, nine crew members, and five terrorists. During the 50 minute flight, passenger Peter Burton Hanson calls his father twice and explains that his plane has been hijacked. He also informs his father that the hijackers were stabbing flight attendants in order to force the crew to open the cockpit doors. Mr. Hanson was traveling with his wife, Sue, and three year old daughter, Christine.

### **8:15 A.M.**

American Airlines Flight 11, which took off 16 minutes earlier, ignores air traffic controller's transmission granting permission to climb to 31,000 feet. This is the first indication the plane has been hijacked.

### **8:20 A.M.**

AA Flight 11's transponder, which broadcasts the aircraft location, is turned off. Shortly afterward, the plane turns south toward New York City and air traffic controllers hear a hijacker's voice in the background.

### **8:21 A.M.**

American Airlines Flight 77 takes off from Dulles International Airport near Washington D.C. The plane, a Boeing 757, is bound for Los Angeles with 53 passengers, six crew members and five terrorists. On board this flight is Barbara Olsen, the wife of the Solicitor General, Theodore Olsen.

### **8:27 A.M.**

Less than 30 minutes after its departure, AA Flight 11 makes a hard left turn over upstate New York and increases its air speed. It is now 18 minutes from the Trade Center in New York City.

### **8:28 A.M.**

UA Flight 175, which took off just 14 minutes earlier, passes the Massachusetts-Connecticut border and makes a 30 degree turn left toward New Jersey. The plane was taken over by five terrorists almost immediately after take off. It is now 35 minutes from the World Trade Center.

### **8:30 AM**

The presidential motorcade leaves for Emma Booker Elementary School. At this point three of the four hijacked planes are in the air. The fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93 should also have been up, but is still on the tarmac waiting for clearance to take off, with all passengers on board.

### **8:40 AM**

Flight attendant Madeline Amy Sweeney (AA Flight 11) calls Michael Woodward, a ground supervisor with American Airlines at Logan Airport. She indicates that a hijacking is in progress, and that the hijackers have wounded some passengers. She also passes along the seat number of one of the hijackers, a key clue for investigators. According to family members, Sweeney ends the call by saying she sees water and buildings, and then says, "Oh my God!"

At this point Boston Air Traffic Control Center notifies the North Atlantic Air Defense Command (NORAD), and informs them that AA Flight 11 has been hijacked.

### **8:43 A.M.**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) notifies NORAD that a second plane, UA Flight 175 has also been hijacked.

### **8:44 A.M.**

United Airlines Flight 93 is on the runway at Newark International Airport preparing for departure to San Francisco. On board are 33 passengers, seven flight personnel and 4 terrorists. The plane, which had been on the tarmac for 41 minutes because of traffic, is taking off as the first plane hits the Trade Center.

### **8:45 AM**

AA Flight 11, which had taken off less than 50 minutes earlier, slams into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at an estimated speed of more than 400 miles per hour, and creates a massive plume of smoke. The plane, loaded with 16,000 pounds of jet fuel, tears a gaping hole in the building and sets it afire.

At this point NORAD orders two F-15 fighters at Otis Air National Guard Base in Falmouth, Massachusetts into the air. They will be airborne in less than five minutes.

### **8:49 AM**

CNN anchor Carol Lin interrupts a commercial with breaking news: "This just in. You are looking at obviously a very disturbing live shot there. This is the World Trade Center, and we have unconfirmed reports this morning that a plane has crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Center."

### **8:50 A.M.**

Responding to 911 calls, the first New York City Fire Department trucks arrive at the World Trade Center. The department broadcasts a ***fifth alarm***, its highest alarm for a fire.

Additionally, while this is taking place, UA Flight 175, which departed 35 minutes earlier from Logan International Airport deviates from its assigned flight path and turns toward New York City. It is now 13 minutes from the World Trade Center.

### **9:00 AM**

President Bush arrives at Emma Booker Elementary School and speaks by phone to national security advisor Condoleezza Rice who tells him that a plane has crashed into the World Trade Center 15 minutes earlier.

UA Flight 175 is within 20 miles of the Trade Center. The smoke from the north tower is clearly visible and the passengers and crew are within three minutes of their death.



Also at this time the transponder on AA Flight 77, which departed from Dulles Airport 45 minutes earlier, is turned off by its hijackers. The plane then changes direction and heads east toward Washington D.C.

**9:03 AM**

United Airlines Flight 175 smashes into the World Trade Center south tower between the 78th and 84th floors. The plane is traveling at more than 500 mph at impact. The F-15 fighter jets dispatched 18 minutes earlier are approximately 70 miles (eight minutes) away.

The impact and explosion are broadcast around the world by television cameras trained on the massive fire in the north tower. A few blocks away CNN producer Rose Arce sees the plane hit the building and hears a young girl who is being evacuated tell her father, "Look Daddy! They're doing it on purpose."

**9:04 AM**

The Federal Aviation Administration's Boston Air Route Traffic Control Center stops all departures from airports in New England and eastern New York state.

**9:05 AM**

The New York City Fire Department issues a second *fifth alarm* to bring more companies to fight the south tower fire.

**9:06 AM**

The FAA halts takeoffs bound to or through the airspace of its New York center from airports in an area north of North Carolina to as far west as eastern Michigan.

**9:07 AM**

While President Bush is sitting in front of the children at Emma Booker Elementary School, White House Chief of Staff, Andrew Card, walks over to him and whispers, "A second plane has hit the second tower." The President's face tightens.

**9:10A.M.**

All bridges and tunnels into Manhattan are closed.

**9:24 A.M.**

The FAA notifies NORAD that AA Flight 77 has been hijacked. NORAD then scrambles two F-16 fighters from Langley Air Force Base in Virginia to intercept the aircraft. The F-16s are in the air within five minutes.

**9:25 A.M.**

Barbara K. Olsen, a hostage on flight 77, calls her husband, Solicitor General Theodore Olsen, at the Justice Department and informs him that her flight has been hijacked. At 9:30 she would place a second call and explain that the pilots and passengers were being held in the back of the plane. Theodore Olsen immediately notifies the Justice Department command post.

**9:26 AM**

The FAA orders a national ground stop, halting the takeoff of all civilian aircraft regardless of destination.

**9:30 AM**

Still in Florida, a grim President Bush makes a brief statement before television cameras, saying the country has suffered an "apparent terrorist attack." He asks for a moment of silence.

**9:35 AM**

Air traffic controllers at Ronald Reagan Airport in Washington DC notify the Secret Service that an unidentified aircraft is approaching the area.

**9:39 A.M.**

UA Flight 93, the last hijacked plane to take off, makes a hard turn south while over Cleveland. It then turns east and begins a heading toward Washington.

**9:40 A.M.**

A third *fifth alarm* is broadcast by the New York City Fire Department. More than 50 companies arrive to fight the fires at both towers.

**9:42 A.M.**

The FAA orders the shutdown of all U.S. airspace and directs all planes in flight to land regardless of their destination. There are more than 4,500 flights in the air at this time. This is the first time in U.S. history that all air traffic in the country has been halted.

**9:43 A.M.**

American Airlines Flight 77 crashes into the Pentagon. The two F-16 fighter jets sent to intercept the plane were 12 minutes and 105 miles away. They would remain airborne to perform combat air patrols over the Capitol.

**9:45 A.M.**

Several passengers on board UA Flight 93 call loved ones and explain that their plane has been hijacked. Passenger Mark Bingham speaks to his mother and informs her that the passengers have voted to try to retake the plane. He then tells her, "I love you very, very much." This is the only hijacked aircraft still flying.

**9:46 A.M.**

After receiving word that a fourth plane is headed toward Washington, Secret Service agents order the White House and the Eisenhower Executive Building evacuated. At first, they tell staffers and the media to file out in an orderly way. They then scream at them to run as fast as they can across Pennsylvania Avenue to Lafayette Park.

**9:55 AM**

President Bush leaves Florida aboard Air Force One. In flight, the President telephones Vice President Dick Cheney and puts the U.S. military worldwide on "high alert."

During this call, the President receives word of the plane crash at the Pentagon (AA Flight 77) as well as the plane crash in Pennsylvania (UA Flight 93). Flight 93 crashes during the call.

**9:59 A.M.**

The south tower of the Trade Center collapses and plunges into the streets below, causing a massive cloud of dust and debris.

**10:00 A.M.**

Passengers and crew members on board UA Flight 93 begin their fight to retake their hijacked plane. Some have suggested that out of fear, all four hijackers have barricaded themselves in the cockpit. It is at this time that passenger Todd Beamer utters the words, "Let's roll."

**10:03 A.M.**

UA Flight 93 crashes in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh.

**10:08 A.M.**

Secret Service agents armed with automatic rifles are deployed into Lafayette Park across the street from the White House.

**10:10 A.M.**

A portion of the Pentagon collapses.

**10:21 AM**

The FAA orders all international flights in progress to the United States to land in Canada.

**10:22 A.M.**

The Justice and State Departments are evacuated along with the World Bank.

**10:28 A.M.**

The World Trade Center's north tower collapses from the top down as if it were being peeled apart. The collapse causes a massive cloud of dust and smoke. It has been roughly 100 minutes since the building was struck by AA Flight 11.

**10:31 AM**

The FAA authorizes all military and law enforcement flights to resume.

**10:40 A.M.**

All federal office buildings in Washington are evacuated.

**10:46 A.M.**

U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, cuts short his trip to Latin America and leaves Peru to return to the United States.

**11:02 A.M.**

New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani urges New Yorkers to stay at home and orders an evacuation of the area south of Canal Street.

**11:45 AM**

Air Force One lands at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. President Bush makes a series of telephone calls from a general's conference room.

**12:04 PM**

Los Angeles International Airport, the destination of three of the hijacked airplanes, is evacuated.

**12:14 P.M.**

Congressional leaders issue a statement pledging full support for President Bush. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, Senate Minority Leader, Trent Lott, House Speaker, Dennis Hastert, and House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, along with other senior leaders in Congress have been flown by helicopter to a secure location outside Washington.

**12:15 P.M.**

San Francisco International Airport, the destination of UA flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania, is shut down.

**12:16 P.M.**

The FAA command center reports that U.S. airspace has been cleared of all commercial and general aviation aircraft; only military and police flights are airborne.

**12:36 PM**

President Bush makes a two-minute taped statement. In the statement, the President tells the nation, "Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward." He asks for prayers for those killed or wounded and says, "The resolve of our great nation is being tested, but make no mistake, we will show the world that we will pass this test."

**1:27 P.M.**

A state of emergency is declared in Washington DC.

**1:48 PM**

President Bush leaves Barksdale Air Force Base aboard Air Force One and flies to Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska. On this flight, the President speaks to his father, former President George Herbert Walker Bush who is at an airport in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, because all flights are grounded.

**2:07 P.M.**

The FAA announces that all domestic flights have been accounted for.

**2:30 P.M.**

The FAA announces that there will be no U.S. commercial air traffic until noon EST Wednesday, September 12, 2001 at the earliest.

**2:49 P.M.**

At a news conference, Mayor Giuliani announces that subway and bus service is partially restored in New York City. When asked about the number of people killed, the mayor says, "I don't think we want to speculate about that -- more than any of us can bear."

**2:50 PM**

Air Force One lands at Offutt Air Force Base, and President Bush is taken to the base's secure command center. The base is the headquarters of the U.S. Strategic Command, which controls the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The underground center at this site was built to survive a nuclear attack.

**3:07 PM**

President Bush convenes the National Security Council, holding a video conference with council members in Washington.

**3:55 PM**

White House counselor Karen Hughes informs the nation that President Bush is conducting a National Security Council meeting via video conference. She also indicates that Vice President Dick Cheney and national security advisor Condoleezza Rice are in a secure location at the White House and that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is at the Pentagon command center.

Also at this time, Mayor Giuliani indicates that the number of people critically injured in New York City is up to 200 with 2,100 total injuries reported.

**4:10 P.M.**

Building seven of the Trade Center complex is reported on fire. It is 47 stories tall.

**4:25 P.M.**

The American Stock Exchange, the NASDAQ and the New York Stock Exchange announce they will remain closed Wednesday.

**4:36 PM**

President Bush leaves Offutt Air Force Base aboard Air Force One to return to Washington. En route, he calls the First Lady and says, "I'm coming home. See you at the White House."

**5:20 P.M.**

Building seven of the Trade Center complex collapses. The evacuated building is mortally damaged when the twin towers across the street collapse earlier in the day. Other buildings nearby are still on fire.

**6:10 P.M.**

Mayor Giuliani urges New Yorkers to stay home Wednesday if they can.

**6:34 PM**

Air Force One lands at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland with a three-fighter jet escort. The President then boards Marine One, the helicopter used to take him back to the White House.

**6:40 P.M.**

U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld holds a news conference in the Pentagon, noting the building is operational. "It will be in business tomorrow," he says.

**6:54 PM**

President Bush arrives at the White House aboard Marine One. The helicopter lands on the South Lawn, which is routine procedure when the President returns to the White House. First Lady Laura Bush arrived earlier by motorcade from a secure location.

**7:00 PM**

President Bush and his aides begin work on a speech he will deliver to the nation in 90 minutes.

**7:45 P.M.**

The New York Police department announces that at least 78 officers are missing. The city also states that as many as half of the first 400 firefighters on the scene were killed.

**8:30 PM**

President Bush addresses the nation. In his speech, he says, "Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil." He then states, "These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve." He then indicates that the United States government will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.

**9:00 PM**

President Bush convenes a meeting of the National Security Council, which is followed by a smaller meeting of key advisors. In this meeting, the President begins planning the military response to the attacks.

**9:57 P.M.**

Mayor Giuliani announces that New York City schools will be closed Wednesday and that no more volunteers are needed for Tuesday evening's rescue efforts. He also states that there is hope that there are still people alive in the rubble. Additionally the mayor indicates that power is out on the west side of Manhattan and that health department tests show there are no airborne chemical agents about which to worry.

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## Appendix II

# Historical Sequence of the Last Days

The following reflects the sequence of events that take place during the last days. These events span a period of just over three and a half years. They begin with the emergence of a beast power and conclude with the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His millennial kingdom.

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- A great beast power emerges during the last days and exercises great power over the earth. (Rev. 13: 1-4)
- A great religious leader emerges and causes all to worship the beast (Rev. 13:11-12). Those who refuse to worship the beast will be killed (verse 15).
- The mark of the beast is given. This mark permits people to buy and sell. Those who refuse it will be subjected to great persecution. (Rev. 13:16-17)
- God's people refuse the mark, resulting in extraordinary persecution. Many true Christians are martyred. (Rev. 6:9-11)
- God's true Church is taken to a place of safety where it is nourished for three and a half years. (Rev. 12:13-14)
- Satan pursues God's Church by "casting out of his mouth water as a flood." This flood may be a great army which pursues the Church. (Rev. 12:15)
- God opens the earth and swallows the flood. (Rev. 12:16)
- Satan turns his wrath on the remnant of the Church. This remnant was not taken to the place of safety, perhaps because of lethargy, but it will keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 12:17)

The Great Tribulation

- The great tribulation begins. This tribulation is identified in the book of Revelation as the fifth seal. During this time, there will be great religious persecution and martyrdom (Rev. 6:9; 12:17). This great tribulation will last three and a half years and will end with the return of Christ.
- Included in this tribulation is a horrible captivity inflicted on the physical descendants of Israel. This captivity is referred to as "Jacob's trouble." (Jer. 30:7)
- Two witnesses testify against the nations of the earth for 1260 days (Rev. 11:1-6). These witnesses testify during the last three and a half years of man's reign on earth. Their witness takes place while God's Church is in a place of safety and the remnant of that Church is suffering persecution and martyrdom during the great tribulation.

- Great signs appear in the heavens. The sun will become black as sackcloth, the moon will become as blood and the stars of heaven shall fall into the earth. This is referred to as the sixth seal. (Rev. 6:12-13)
- The servants of God are sealed in their forehead. This sealing will protect them from God's wrath which is reflected in the seventh seal. The total number of servants which will receive God's seal is 144,000. (Rev. 7:1-4)
- There is silence in heaven for approximately one half hour. (Rev. 8:1)

The Day of the Lord

- The Day of the Lord begins. This is also described as the day of God's wrath and is pictured by the opening of the seventh seal. This period will last for one year and occurs during the final year of the great tribulation. Additionally, it will be a time of enormous devastation inflicted upon man because of his defiance toward God. This seventh seal will include seven trumpet plagues and seven vial plagues.
- The first trumpet plague is unleashed. This plague consists of hail, fire, and blood (Rev. 8:7). The result is that one third of the earth's trees are burnt and all grass is destroyed.
- The second trumpet plague is unleashed consisting of fire cast into the sea (Rev. 8:8-9). The result is that one third of the sea becomes blood, one third of sea life dies, and one third of the ships are destroyed.
- The third trumpet plague is unleashed. "Wormwood" falls on a third of the earth's waters and many men die. (Rev. 8:10-11)
- The fourth trumpet plague is unleashed. The sun, moon, and stars are darkened. (Rev. 8:12)
- An angel flies through heaven and cries out, "Woe, woe, woe!" These three woes represent the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpet plagues. (Rev. 8:13)
- The fifth trumpet plague is unleashed (the first woe). During this plague, "locusts with the power of scorpions" inflict great damage. This represents a great military attack. (Rev. 9:1-3)
- The sixth trumpet plague (second woe) is unleashed. A massive army (200 million soldiers) launches a counter-attack, resulting in the death of one third of mankind. (Rev. 9:12-19)
- The two witnesses are killed and lay dead in the street for three and a half days. (Rev. 11:7-9)
- People will celebrate the killing of these two witnesses. (Rev. 11:10)
- The two witnesses are resurrected in plain view of those who celebrated their death. They then ascend into the clouds. (Rev. 11:11-12)
- The seventh and last trump is sounded. This is the third woe. At this trump, voices in heaven declare, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. 11:14-15)
- The saints are resurrected and meet Christ in the air. Those who are alive will be miraculously changed and join them. (1Cor. 15:51-52; 1Thes. 4:16-17)

- There is a great marriage supper. It is possible this supper takes place in heaven at the very residence of God the Father. This supper celebrates the marriage of Jesus Christ (the Lamb) and His Church (the bride). (Rev. 19:6-9)
- The seven last plagues are inflicted upon the earth (Rev. 16). These plagues are poured out of seven vials by seven angels.
- Jesus Christ returns with a great army of His saints. (Rev. 19:11-16)
- The battle of Armageddon takes place in which God's army crushes man's final rebellion. (Rev. 19:11-21)
- The beast and false prophet are overcome and cast into a lake of fire and brimstone. (Rev. 19:19-20)
- Satan is bound for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2).

The Millennium Begins

- This begins a period of one thousand years in which Jesus Christ and his saints will rule (Rev. 20:4-5). This millennial kingdom will be a time of great peace, prosperity, health, and hope. It will be a time when the knowledge of God will be available to all who dwell on the earth.

The Millennium Ends

- A second resurrection takes place in which all those who never knew God will be raised to a physical life and be given an opportunity to learn of God's plan for mankind. At that time, those who are resurrected will choose for themselves whether they will obey God. (Rev. 20:13; Ezek. 37)
- Satan is loosed for "a little season." (Rev. 20:3, 7) At that time, he goes out and deceives the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth.
- A great battle ensues. (Rev. 20:8)
- Satan's final rebellion is crushed. (Rev. 20:9)
- Satan is cast into a lake of fire and ultimately into outer darkness where he will be tormented forever. (Rev. 20:10, Jude 13)

The Great White Throne Judgment

- A third resurrection takes place in which all who are not a part of the first resurrection will appear before God's judgment seat to receive His final pronouncement concerning them. This is also referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment. (Rev. 20:11, 13-15)
- A new heaven and earth are created. (Rev. 21:1)
- The New Jerusalem is brought down by God out of heaven. (Rev. 21:2)

Appendix III

Seven Seals of Revelation

The table below reflects "end time" world conditions seen by the apostle John in a series of visions while he was on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. Although the events John saw have existed for millennia, they will reach their highest level of intensity during the last generation of man on earth.

| Seal | Description | Reference |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 st Seal White Horse | Religious deception | Rev. 6:2 |
| 2 nd Seal Red horse | War and conflict | Rev. 6:4 |
| 3 rd Seal Black Horse | Famine | Rev. 6:5-6 |
| 4 th Seal Pale Horse | Pestilence and death | Rev. 6:7-8 |
| 5 th Seal | Great martyrdom of Saints | Rev. 6:9-11 |
| 6 th Seal | Heavenly Signs | Rev. 6:12-17 |
| 7 th Seal | Seven Trumpet Plagues | Rev. 8:1-2 |

Appendix IV Seven Trumpet Plagues of Revelation

The table below reflects the devastation that takes place during what is literally the last year of man's reign on earth. It begins with a period of silence lasting about "a half an hour."

Rev. 8:1

| Trumpet | Description | Source |
|-------------------------|--|---------------|
| 1 st Trumpet | Hail, fire, and blood | Rev. 8:7 |
| 2 nd Trumpet | A great mountain with fire is cast into the sea | Rev. 8:8-9 |
| 3 rd Trumpet | A great star (Wormwood) falls from heaven upon a third of the rivers | Rev. 8:10-11 |
| 4 th Trumpet | One third of the sun, moon, and stars are made black | Rev. 8:12-13 |
| 5 th Trumpet | Locusts with the power of scorpions are unleashed on the earth for five months. Their target: all men not sealed by God. | Rev. 9:1-11 |
| 6 th Trumpet | One third of mankind is killed by a 200 million man army. | Rev. 9:12-19 |
| 7 th Trumpet | Voices in heaven announce the return of the Christ. A reward is given to God's servants. | Rev. 11:15-18 |

Appendix V Seven Vial Plagues of Revelation

The table below reflects what are commonly referred to as "the Seven Last Plagues."
These plagues are poured out of seven vials (bowls) during what are literally the
final days of man's reign on earth.

| Vial | Description | Source |
|----------------------|--|---------------|
| 1 st Vial | Noisome and grievous sores upon all men who worship the beast | Rev. 16:1-2 |
| 2 nd Vial | The sea becomes blood killing everything in it | Rev. 16:3 |
| 3 rd Vial | Rivers and fountains become blood | Rev. 16:4-7 |
| 4 th Vial | The sun scorches men with fire and they blaspheme the name of God. | Rev. 16:8 |
| 5 th Vial | Darkness falls on the Beast power. | Rev. 16:10 |
| 6 th Vial | The river Euphrates dries up and preparations are made for the battle of Armageddon. | Rev. 16:12-14 |
| 7 th Vial | A great earthquake and great hail from heaven. | Rev. 16:17-21 |

Appendix VI
Prophetic Comparison Table

The table below reflects the words of Jesus Christ as expressed in the Olivet Prophecy and their relationship to the words recorded by the apostle John when writing the book of Revelation.

| Jesus' Warning | Description | John's Vision |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------|
| Matt. 24:4-5,11,24 | False ministers and religious deception | Rev. 6:2 |
| Matt. 24:6-7 | Great racial strife, war and conflict | Rev. 6:4 |
| Matt. 24:7 | Famine | Rev. 6:5 |
| Matt. 24:7 | Pestilence and death | Rev. 6:7-8 |
| Matt. 24:9-10 | Great tribulation on God's people | Rev. 6:9-11 |
| Matt. 24:14 | Great gospel preached | Rev. 11:3-6 |
| Matt. 24:15 | The abomination of Desolation | Rev. 13 |
| Matt. 24:16-20 | Flight of God's Church | Rev. 12:14 |
| Matt. 24:29 | Signs in the heavens | Rev. 6:13 |
| Matt. 24:30 | The return of Jesus Christ | Rev. 19:11-16 |