

#### Part IV: Paradigm Shift

##### Matthew 24: 38 & 39

For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

As noted earlier in this book, people throughout the centuries since Christ's ascension have wondered if the events of their times signaled the impending end of the age, and if they were living in the End Times. Obviously we, with the advantage of hindsight, know they were not. But are we?

Speculation has burgeoned in recent years that history may soon intersect with some cyclical or cataclysmic event that will dramatically end one age of human existence and give birth to another. A sense of impending change pervades societies across the globe, frightening many and filling others with anticipation and even hope.

Attempts to ascribe dates to the prophetic events recorded in scripture will always be futile. But as the scriptures warn us, we can (and should) remain vigilant, that the end of the age does not catch us unaware.

The next four chapters explore how trends and events in the world today may suggest we are living in the decades preceding the impending end. They are no more than that – an examination of trends and events unfolding around us, in light of what the scriptures say about the End Times. The world has never been a simple place, and no period of history can be comprehensively summed up in so few words as follows. But it may be sufficient here to suggest that the world today is a far more complex and dangerous place than at any other time in history, and to ask the question:

"Are current events a bellwether of the culmination of God's Plan for the re-conquest and recreation of the earth?"

Some of us cannot help but hope that they are. So let us watch and read the daily news, and wonder.

Chapter 19  
The New Paradigm  
(Politics, religion, and everything)

From the last decade of the twentieth century emerged a new/old paradigm, model or explanation for how the world works – one that, well into the first decade of the twenty-first century, many have yet to acknowledge and embrace. Might it be within this paradigm shift that we see the seeds of the End Times sown?

In history books we read that the first half of the twentieth century was characterized by the Balance of Power paradigm, or by continually shifting alliances among nations attempting to maintain a balance of power and thereby deter aggression and secure the peace. These shifting alliances instead generated uncertainties and tensions in international relations and eventually helped precipitate two world wars of unprecedented bloodletting and destruction.

By contrast, the second half of the century was characterized by the Superpower paradigm, or a standoff between two supremely powerful nations, America and the Soviet Union, and their allies. Unlike its Balance of Power predecessor, this superpower standoff proved an arrangement that, to a very surprising degree preserved, maintained and literally enforced stability and relative peace in the world.

In hindsight, the second half of the twentieth century, and the closing decades of the century in particular, may have been a much less dangerous time than remembered by those of us who lived through it as children, adolescents and adults. Certainly the world faced many dangers during the great superpower standoff – the rivalry between America and the Soviet Union precipitated a nuclear arms race, the ever present dread of 'them' overpowering or even annihilating 'us', and the frightening phenomenon of grown men wielding great power threatening each other (and the rest of us) with mutual assured destruction (MAD). Living under this threat of nuclear incineration was not fun. But the struggle between the superpowers was called the Cold War for a reason – we avoided repeating the economic chaos and wholesale mayhem of the first half of that same century, and we stepped back from the nuclear abyss on those occasions we dared approach.

For decades a balancing act along a great ideological divide maintained world order. Most nations courted or were courted by, embraced or were forcibly absorbed by the democratic, capitalist West, led by America and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or by the authoritarian, communist East, led by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The world economy, and especially the economies of the Western democracies, rose with America's economy. Advanced technology (and especially weapons technology) remained the domain of the few. Resources met demand, with the lion's share of demand arising from the consumer oriented West. Environmental stress as a consequence of human activity had only just begun to manifest itself on a global scale.

Then the Soviet Union collapsed, the Warsaw Pact dissolved, communism was debunked and the Cold War ended. America, and Western civilization, declared themselves the winners of the Cold War, and optimists predicted the end of international conflict and divisiveness. Many

saw an age of one-world peace and cooperation a possibility, with America and its European allies leading the way in establishing a universal civilization – a dream as old as civilization itself. Thus was born the Universal Civilization paradigm – one that suggested the ultimate, global triumph of Western cultural ideals and institutions.

But the Universal Civilization paradigm never live up to expectations – it failed to explain accurately how the world would work in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the opposite of this paradigm proved the reality. The West, and especially America without its 'Evil Empire' adversary, became for many the definition of everything bad in the world. The gods of the age – democracy, liberalism, humanism, free enterprise, consumerism and modernism, to name just a few in addition to communism – had failed to deliver paradise to the masses. Old alliances, without old enemies, cooled and then teetered on the verge of collapse. Attempts to substitute an "Axis of Evil" and a 'War on Terrorism' failed to revive Cold War solidarity. America, left the only superpower standing, faced multiple challenges, where it had previously faced a single, head-on challenge. The world was suddenly no longer 'us' versus 'them', but 'everyone for themselves'.

Nations and regions long hindered by Cold War tensions, the East/West divide, trade barriers and/or enforced isolation joined the global marketplace and exploited their potential. Transfers of technology, the movement of people and ideas, and international trade burgeoned. Economic competition redefined international relations and alignments. Shifting trade balances enriched and empowered some nations and threatened the long-established prosperity and economic power of others. Global connectedness, global trade, global interaction, global interdependence – globalization – failed to procure global peace, global order or global prosperity.

The Superpower paradigm had gone the way of its predecessor, the Balance of Power paradigm – both consigned to the dustbin of history – and a Universal Civilization proved an illusion. Something else was needed to explain how the world works. And something old, foundational, and almost forgotten has returned, replacing Cold War ideologies as the explanation of how the world works and providing the only definition of 'us' versus 'them' that has any real relevance at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Culture – the traditional core values, institutions and worldviews that define societies and, by extension, define every person born into these societies – is once more becoming the basis for individual and national identity, and the basis for alignments among nations and regions.

At heart we are creatures of the cultures of our upbringing. And at the heart of every culture is religion. A sense of the Divine is hardwired into each of us. When we rebel against the One Who made us this way, we doom ourselves to yield allegiance to lesser deities – either to false messiahs or to physical and mental idols of our own making: the self, the family, the tribe, the nation; our culture or our civilization; the ideologies of the age. History is the history of our struggle with our innate need to worship and serve something bigger than ourselves – for something other than ourselves to believe in – for some kind of religion.

In the twentieth century ideology had for several decades served this purpose for many. By mid-century the chief of these were liberalism (in the West) and communism (in the East).

All other forms of allegiance were cast aside, demoted, or made to serve the causes of the ideological gods of the age. Some then had predicted the eventual decline and demise of all traditional value systems and the blurring, and eventual melding, of all cultural identities into one universal culture.

But in the twenty-first century traditional, historic, and cultural identities have resurged as sources of individual and national identity. God had not died. Indeed, God and gods once more have exerted their dominion over the earth, and religion is again the definition of culture – or cultural identities are becoming religions.

And religion will be at the center of the events that unfold at the end of the age.

Throughout the last half of the twentieth century Europeans began to embrace (some may say create) a Culture of Europe, or a set of common European values. By the end of the century this effort yielded success in the form of a unity unprecedented in European history – the European Union. However, it is very doubtful this unity will jump the cultural divide at the Bosphorus – Turkey's bid for membership in the European Union currently founders in the crosscurrents of cultural and religious differences between Europe and Asia despite the fact that, for almost a century, Turkey has been the most "ideologically Westernized" of Middle Eastern nations (for example, Turkey has been a member of the Council of Europe since shortly after the founding of that organization in 1949, and a member of NATO since 1951). The same is true, but perhaps to a lesser degree, for Eastern Europe, as nations with Orthodox heritage experience difficulties joining a Union where most of the current member nations have a Catholic or Protestant heritage. And within many European nations today large Muslim minorities are challenging the new European cultural unity, by refusing to assimilate into the cultures of their host societies and clinging instead to their traditional, Islamic heritage.

With the collapse of communism at the end of the twentieth century Czechoslovakia split along ethnic (cultural) lines, into the Czech Republic and Slovakia; but then both nations joined the European Union. Yugoslavia, on the other hand, shattered into long-suppressed cultural and religious communities, and ethnic cleansing once again visited the shores of Europe. The Soviet Union – an experiment in creating a universal culture of international communism – dissolved, and Russia became once more for the (ethnic) Russians.

Muslims from the Atlantic to the Pacific rediscovered their Islamic heritage – and either redefined modernism under the shadow of Islam or rejected modernism in favor of Islamic traditionalism and fundamentalism. In the Levant, Mesopotamia and Arabia they also rediscovered ethnic and sectarian differences within Islam. As I write these words Iraqi democracy founders on the shoals of a three-way split between the nation's Shi'ias, Sunnis and Kurds, and Persian Iran seeks to dominate its Arab neighbors.

China, still nominally a communist state, has reunited with Hong Kong and Macau and is engaged in off-and-on dialogue for reunification with Taiwan. All three were aligned with, or controlled by, the West throughout the twentieth century. But their populations are overwhelmingly Han Chinese, and now identify strongly with their ethnic brothers and sisters.

At the same time, China experiences outbreaks of violence between Han Chinese majorities and large ethnic Muslim minorities in many places on the mainline. It also struggles with the separatist aspirations of Turkic Muslims in its westernmost province.

The two Koreas, decades apart economically and ideologically, share a common culture and history and engage in reunification dialogue.

America – liberal, religious, and culturally diverse – struggles with its national identity, and with its role in international affairs.

The list of nations and peoples who are realigning, reinforcing, and redefining their identities, their loyalties, and their allegiance along cultural and religious lines encompasses the globe.

The world is dividing itself once more along cultural and religious lines. But unlike the past, opportunities for conflict along and across such lines abound in a modern world where communication is almost universal and instantaneous and the movement of goods, technologies, people and ideas is quick, easy, and cheap. Time and distances shrink to insignificance. Rivers, mountains, deserts and oceans no longer impose barriers, enforce isolation, guarantee protection, or buy breathing space for reflection, debate, or preparation. Change, economic competition, and now cultural and religious competition, on regional and global scales, are the rule rather than the exception. What happens half a world away is known almost instantaneously everywhere, with ramifications that manifest in days, if not hours.

Immigrants no longer sever ties with their homelands and assimilate into the cultures of the nations to which they emigrate, but retain their cultural identities through cell phones, the Internet, satellite television, and commercial jet flights. Ethnic minorities find strength, unity and purpose in their ethnicity and rise up to demand self-government and independence, often with moral and material support from likeminded groups and nations around the world. Shadow armies of holy warriors move across the globe and coordinate operations with unprecedented ease and effectiveness. Terrorists who, half a century past, were armed only with knives, handguns and pipe bombs blow up airliners in mid-flight or fly them into buildings. Fanatics detonate a truckload of explosives at a refinery checkpoint in Saudi Arabia and within hours the price of crude oil spikes on the international market. Madmen in the Middle East and on a tiny Asian peninsula obtain weapons-grade nuclear material and missile technology, sending shivers through capitals around the world.

What had seemed impossible in the recent past now seems inevitable. Emerging economies in Asia, in South America, and in the resurgent Russian Federation challenge the long dominant economies of the West. Four billion Asians aspire to a standard of living enjoyed by one billion Westerners. Regional competition between cultures – and increasingly between religions – for resources and markets, for territory and military supremacy, and for the hearts and minds of peoples, tribes and nations, has replaced the former ideological competition between superpowers. The ability to motivate the multitudes with appeals to god and country has returned, with a vengeance. The threat of nuclear proliferation has replaced the nuclear standoff between America and the Soviet Union.

In the twentieth century, balance of power brinkmanship and ideological competition seemed to have replaced culture and religion as the definition of 'us' versus 'them'. But culture, and increasingly religion, which in ages past had been the root motivations for conflict between and within nations and civilizations, has returned. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the world really is a global village – one armed to the teeth and populated with 'foreigners', many of them religious, and many of these ready and able to strike at their neighbors in the name of God.

A pattern emerges from the flux and flow of world events and trends – a pattern recognizable to anyone who studies the prophecies recorded on the pages of scripture. The fantastic and the improbable are now the familiar and the inevitable. Incineration of cities and nations with fire from the heavens is no longer the exclusive purview of the few or the divine, and the ability to man, arm, supply, field and direct armies of 200,000,000 or more is within the realm of technological possibility. The ancient writings of old men in captivity and in caves are more relevant today than at any time since they first put pen to papyrus.

The new/old paradigm – the one that emerged from the pages of the Bible to cast a long shadow over the twenty-first century (that one) is staring us in the face. Some have labeled this new paradigm the Clash of Cultures, or the Clash of Civilizations – it may prove in the end to be the Clash of Religions. Maybe we ought to look at it long and hard before we look away. It is the only explanation we have now for how things work in the world.

The question is asked: Will America's experiments to democratize and liberalize the Middle East succeed?

The answer is: Probably not.

The war in Iraq has brought to glaring light a fundamental quality of the age – a clash of cultures between the Near (or Middle) East and the West, between Islamic and Western cultures.

Ten years ago, suggesting such a thing seemed politically incorrect. Now books and articles explore the subject, a few of which are listed at the end of this chapter.

When America invaded Iraq and toppled Saddam, Americans expected Iraqis to embrace characteristically Western cultural values and institutions. At a minimum, we expected the Iraqis to adopt, as the foundation of their newly-freed society, the fundamental Western values and institutions of democracy in government, equality under the law, the separation of religious and civil authority, and the primacy of the nation-state as the basis of social identity and security. We encouraged Iraqis to vote a 'unity government' into power, but not all Iraqis voted, and the government failed to unify the nation. We encouraged Iraqis to write a new constitution, and were appalled that it did not guarantee equality to all Iraqis nor did it guarantee separation of religious and civil authority. We insisted that a united Iraq become the basis of national identity for all Iraqis (Sunnis, Shiia, Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmen, Jews, Christians, etc.), and are dismayed by attacks on Iraqi Jewish and Christian minorities, by de facto Kurdish independence in the North, de facto Sunni/Shiia civil war in the South, and ethnic cleansing in and around Baghdad.

All this, I think, points to a fatal flaw in the thinking of most Americans – believe it or not, not everyone – and, given their turbulent history with Western meddling, especially not everyone in the Middle East – wants to be 'just like us'. To understand why, we have to understand a bit more of the history of the Middle East, and how it shaped a culture so different from our own.

Culture, at foundation, can be defined as the values, behaviors, beliefs, institutions and thought characteristic of a society, shaped over time by a shared history. Culture is the essence of corporate identity and individual security, without which societies cannot exist.

The cultural foundation of society from ancient times has been the family, clan and tribe, and religion. The rise of civilizations added to this foundation the city-state and the nation. Empires followed – essentially city-states or nations that dominated, but never succeeded in supplanting, the cultural foundations of conquered peoples.

As already noted in this book (the chapter on the Arabs) a new religion, Islam, largely shaped Middle Eastern culture from the Seventh Century onward. Islam united the indigenous, predominantly Arab tribal societies of Arabia and, at the same time, merged both religious and civil cultural institutions under God's perfect, final and unchanging law (what Muslims call Sharia).

The absolute and central role that religion (Islam) played in shaping Islamic culture stands in stark contrast to the role that another religion (Christianity) played in shaping another culture (Western European culture).

Christianity, the predominant religion of Western civilization, began as a persecuted sect within the precursor of Western civilization – the Roman Empire – which already had an established religious hierarchy when the followers of Jesus Christ began spreading the Gospel. Only after centuries of perseverance did Christianity achieve a place alongside civil authority. Before Christianity's victory over paganism the Roman emperors, who were both agents of the gods and worshipped as gods, embodied both religious and civil authority. After the ascendancy of Christianity the emperors, and later the kings of Europe, shared authority with the Church. At times the Church vied with civil authority for primacy, or civil authority sought to bend the Church to its purposes. Kings claimed divine rights and popes seated and unseated dynasties. But at no time was Christianity and civil authority effectively merged. Indeed, some have suggested with good cause that the separation of religious and civil authority is a uniquely Western and Christian cultural institution, founded in the teachings of Christianity's founder, Jesus Christ ('render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and unto God that which is God's'). Christ's teachings were (and are) often ignored or violated in the West – even at times by the institutional Church. However, the influence of his teachings in shaping Western culture cannot be denied.

In the Muslim world, the union of religious and civil authority began with Islam's founding under Muhammad, Islam's prophet and Allah's representative, and under Sharia law, the foundational legal code of traditional Muslim societies. This union has always been central to classic Islamic thought and practice. In the minds of most Muslims today the union of religious

and civil authority is the foundation of society – there can be no separation of religious and civil authority.

The primacy of Sharia as God's perfect, final and unchanging law has hindered the separation of religious and civil authority in Islamic culture. It has also hindered development of democratic ideals in Middle Eastern societies.

Western society over time emancipated, then granted equal rights under the law, to all citizens, without which democracy, in the modern Western sense of the institution, is impossible. As with separation of religious and civil authority, some have attributed these cultural developments in the West at least in part to the teachings and example of Christ ('do unto others as you would have them do unto you'). And again, while his teachings were and are often ignored or violated, the influence of his teachings on the development of Western cultural values, behaviors, beliefs, institutions and thought is undeniable.

Sharia law, among other things, institutionalized from Islam's founding the status of men over women, the believer (Muslim) over the non-believer, and the free over the slave. Wherever Sharia prevails, the social stratification embodied in the Muslim legal code is law; the Western cultural ideal of legal equality regardless of religion, gender or social status runs counter to Islam's foundational law.

One may ask why this religious identification remains so central to modern Islamic culture. In the West Christianity's influence had its negative side; religious authorities seeking to control society instigated wars, persecutions, inquisitions, and innumerable other conflicts, sometimes between religious factions and other times between religious and non-religious societal forces. The solution proved to be the ultimate application of the separation principle taught by Christ – religious authority constrained to things spiritual and civil authority ascendant in everything else.

Islam, too, has its negative side, as witnessed by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, religious extremism and the on-going conflict between Sunni and Shiia Muslims. But unlike Christianity, Islam's continued primacy in Middle Eastern culture has been reinforced (and indeed continues to be reinforced) at least in part by outside forces – that is, the Muslim experience with invading, conquering armies from about the Tenth Century onward, an experience not shared by the West.

At the crossroads of three continents, the Middle East since antiquity has suffered successive waves of foreign invasion and occupation. From the east came the Medes and Persians, and later the Parthians. From the west came the Greeks and the Romans. The vulnerability of the Middle East to invasion and conquest also plagued Muslim civilization after its own rise to dominance in the region.

By contrast, the history of Western Europe (at least since Roman times) is primarily the history of Europeans fighting among themselves, while managing to keep the invader largely at bay. This condition that eventually facilitated the rise of the institution of the nation-state, a political and social structure of defined geographic and ethnic boundaries (Britain, France, Prussia/Germany, Austria, etc.). Europeans over time began to identify with, and depend for security upon, these nation-states, a development facilitated by the established Western cultural

value of separation of religious and civil authority and the ascendancy of civil authority in all things non-religious. By the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, the Western values as nationalism, patriotism and statism had largely supplanted the ancient sources of both identity and security – the family, the clan, the tribe and religion. By the late Twentieth Century this process had evolved into an embryonic super-state, the European Union.

The history of the Middle East is the history of Muslims fighting among themselves, but also contending with successive waves of invaders from the East (Seljuk Turks, Mongols and Ottoman Turks) and from the West (Christian Crusaders, the French, the British, the Italians and most recently the Americans). Under circumstances wherein foreign domination came and went, individuals and societies clung to ancient sources of identity and security – the family, the clan, the tribe and religion. That, with the sole exception of America (at least, to date) all invaders of the Near East since the rise of Islam either converted to Islam or were eventually ejected further reinforced the primacy of Islam in Muslim society. Islam – along with the family, clan and tribe – were (and remain) foundational constants in a region continually invaded and conquered by outsiders.

In classic Muslim thought, even the concept of nationhood is founded, not in geography, but in religion – Islam – which asserts the unity of all Muslims under Sharia law. As in the West, the teachings of Islam have been and often are ignored or violated by Muslim societies – however, as also in the West, the influence of religion on cultural values, behaviors, beliefs, institutions and thought are undeniable. Indeed, the continued primacy of Islam, as the very real foundation of Islamic civilization, has only strengthened as a cultural value, in the mind of many Muslims, the unity of all Muslims under Islam (the Ummah).

The very concept of the nation-state of defined geographic and ethnic boundaries, such as it exists in the Middle East today (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, etc.) is largely one foisted upon a conquered people by French and British colonial powers in the middle of the Twentieth Century and most recently, in Afghanistan and Iraq, by America. While some Muslims – most notably the Turks – have embraced nationalism, secularism and democracy, the nation-state, together with other Western cultural values such as liberal democracy, legal equality regardless of religion, gender or social status, and separation of religious and civil authority, remain in the minds of many if not most Middle Eastern Muslims inventions of the Crusader West.

In the final analysis, the struggle between the secular West and the Islamic Middle East has sparked a clash of cultures that will test the merits of the cultural foundations of each. It has also sparked a clash within Islam, between those who would embrace Western cultural values and those who reject them and, because of Islam's continued primacy within Middle Eastern culture, between various religious factions within Islam. Muslims who reject Western values and cling to the time-honored bulwark of Islam may yet prove whether, among cultural identifiers, religion and religious law trump all else. The West should wake up and take notice – but I fear that the West will not.

'President George W. Bush's vision for the Iraq War was nothing if not expansive. Liberal democracy and popular sovereignty were to supplant tyranny not only in Baghdad, but in nearby capitals as well. And the force of U.S. arms would not be needed to accomplish the latter

missions. As Bush asserted to eager applause at the American Enterprise Institute on February 25, 2003, “a new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region.” Democracy, the war party believed, would be contagious.' (from: Regional Implications of the Iraq War by Chris Toensing | March 27, 2007 - Foreign Policy In Focus <http://www.fpiif.org/fpiftxt/4109> accessed 6/5/07)

That Iraq has not blossomed into a Westernized, secular, egalitarian, liberal democratic nation-state comes as no surprise to the student of history. But then, students of history rarely if ever make history – that is the overwhelming purview of authorities, both civil and religious.

Would that these from time to time read a little history.

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Chapter 20  
The Fourth Turning Meets the Second Coming  
(Convergence of sacred and secular prophecy)

Can a study of secular and sacred texts reveal the future? It would appear so, as the prognostic publications of modern historians, futurists, and government think tanks begin to synchronize with the writings of ancient prophets.

"The Fourth Turning", a book of cycles in American history written by William Strauss and Neil Howe (Broadway Books 1998), "Mapping the Global Future", a report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project for the CIA (NIC 2004-13 December 2004) and "An Abrupt Climate Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security", a report prepared for the U.S. Department of Defense by Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall (October 2003), are just three of many such publications that, when taken together, suggest a convergence of trends and cycles in the not too distant future that could have been lifted from the pages of the Holy Bible (ca. 1,400 B.C. to ca. 100 A.D.).

In their book "The Fourth Turning", Strauss and Howe argue persuasively that, for the last five hundred years, Anglo-American civilization has experienced, with impressive regularity, a pattern of eighty to one hundred year cycles, or Saeculums, each consisting of four generational phases, or Turnings (ranging from fifteen to twenty-five years each), of social renewal, fragmentation, decline and upheaval. Each Saeculum ends with the resolution of a national crises and begins with a First Turning – a period of confidence in the existing social order and its institutions, a consequence of society successfully pulling together to cope with the upheavals of the previous Saeculum. A Second Turning of social fragmentation follows, as society feels secure enough to allow a new generation to experiment with a diversity of value systems and free-will choices. This social fragmentation results in a Third Turning of social unraveling and decline, in which the institutions of the existing social order prove less and less capable of adapting to meet the demands of society's increasingly divergent and conflicting elements. Society's unraveling and decline suddenly reverses in a cataclysmic upheaval, caused by events that spark a reaction to correct the causes and consequences of the decline (Fourth Turning). The resolution of this upheaval creates a new social order and initiates the First Turning of the next Saeculum.

The last upheaval (or Fourth Turning) began in 1929 with the stock market crash in America, which served as the catalyst for the Great Depression. It reached a climatic crisis at the outbreak of World War II and was resolved with a total Allied victory over the Axis powers. A new world order emerged, in which America and the Soviet Union were the big winners (the First Turning of the current Saeculum). According to Strauss and Howe, America (and possibly the rest of the world) has already passed through a subsequent Second Turning of social fragmentation and is near the end of a Third Turning of social unraveling and decline. America and the world are now poised for the next big cataclysm, which will most likely hit at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century and resolve itself about fifteen to twenty-five years after its onset, or around 2025 to 2035.

Strauss and Howe note that the event or events triggering the next Fourth Turning will be less important than society's reaction. Specifically, an event such as 9/11, while catastrophic, would trigger the onset of a Fourth Turning only if society is ready for a fundamental shift in the current social order. Judging by society's reactions to 9/11, America has not yet reached a point where such an event can spark a fundamental backlash to the social unraveling and fragmentation evident every night on cable news networks (red states versus blue, conservatives versus liberals, Democrats versus Republicans, religious fundamentalists versus social liberals, personal freedom versus social responsibility, and obsession with political correctness and celebrity media circuses). However, such a reaction is about due.

As Strauss and Howe note in their book, America has successfully weathered three Fourth Turnings in its short history (Revolutionary War, Civil War, and Great Depression/World War II). However, they also note that past successes are no guarantees of future success.

The National Intelligence Council's report, "Mapping the Global Future", suggests that the 'international order is in the midst of profound change' within the context of globalization (defined as the 'growing interconnectedness reflected in the expanded flows of information, technology, capital, goods, services and people throughout the world'). The Council postulates four possible scenarios for the shape of the world in 2020 based on developing global trends. One scenario envisions America maintaining its current predominance in global affairs in an increasingly complex geopolitical environment of shifting international alliances and relationships, creating new challenges as America struggles to 'fashion a new and inclusive global order'. Another envisions a continuing spread of global terrorism and a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which creates a 'cycle of fear' that hampers globalization and world trade. A third envisions robust Asian economies continuing to out-pace Western economies, giving globalization 'a more non-Western face', with the Middle East lagging behind and 'threatening the future of globalization'. A fourth envisions continuing unrest and growing religious fundamentalism in the Middle East giving rise to a new Caliphate, uniting much of the Muslim world and creating new challenges among Muslims and between Muslims and non-Muslims, including challenges to 'Western norms and values as the foundation of the global system'. (As already noted in this book, the last Caliphate, or unifying Muslim empire, ended with the breakup of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, a direct consequence of World War I.

The Council points out in the introduction of its report that these scenarios 'are not meant as actual forecasts, but they describe possible worlds upon whose threshold we may be entering, depending on how trends interweave and play out'. They further note that other scenarios are also possible, and that these scenarios are not necessarily mutually exclusive but may 'unfold in some combination' or in combination with 'a wide range of other scenarios'.

Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall state that the purpose of their report "An Abrupt Climate Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security" is to examine how rapid climate change could 'challenge United States national security'. While not predictive, Schwartz and Randall present research to suggest that the potential exists for rapid and severe climate change to occur over the next three decades, with catastrophic consequences for much of the world (severe droughts, excessive cold and heat, massive flooding, rising ocean levels, etc.)

resulting in the widespread famine, disease and pestilence. This climate change and its consequences would most likely trigger mass migrations, disruptions in trade, and increases in armed conflicts over declining resources (arable land, clean water, etc.). While some areas of the world would be less affected by sudden climate change or would have the resources to cope (such as the U.S., Australia, Eastern Europe and possibly Russia), other areas would not (Western Europe, which would be particularly hard hit, and Africa, the Middle East and Asia, which have large populations and few resources). Their timeline projects out to the year 2030.

Bible prophecies also suggest that the world is about due for a cataclysmic change, but one of fundamental (indeed cosmic) proportions. A period of great global upheaval (the End Times) will occur immediately before this change – a period in which the antichrist will emerge, quite possibly in the Middle East. The antichrist will dominate world affairs until the End Times culminate in, and abruptly end with, the Second Coming of Christ, who will resolve all conflicts through his claim as the Rightful Ruler of creation. Christ will then rule the earth for a thousand years, a period commonly called the Millennial Kingdom, prior reuniting the earth with His eternal, heavenly kingdom.

Many Christians believe that developments over the past hundred years, as well as current trends and events, have set the stage for the onset of the End Times. The restoration of Israel in 1948 (after almost two thousand years of dispersion), its subsequent and current prominence in global affairs, and the hostility of surrounding nations are prophesied in the Bible as End Times events. Other current world trends and events that seem to fulfill of Bible prophecy include the unification of Europe (the European Union) and the rise of Asian nations (China, Japan and India in particular) to great power status.

#### Scenario outline

The next cataclysmic upheaval (Fourth Turning) could occur around 2010 (eighty-two years after the last upheaval - Black Tuesday, the market crash that sparked the Great Depression of 1929). This will perhaps be too soon for the coming antichrist to influence events, but soon enough for him to gain power as a consequence of the ensuing turmoil.

An intriguing parallel, involving another ‘antichrist’, can be drawn from the events of the last Fourth Turning and possibly applied to the next. Specifically, Adolph Hitler in 1929 was a rising power in Germany as leader of the Nazi party. He did not cause the Great Depression, but over the twelve years of economic and social upheaval following the onset of the Great Depression Hitler became the supreme leader, or Fuehrer, over Germany and over much of German-conquered Europe.

Likewise, over the twelve or so years following the next upheaval, the antichrist could emerge as a powerful world leader by exploiting the turmoil ensuing from the coming crisis and its resolution. Unlike Hitler, who lost his bid for world domination, the antichrist could successfully exploit the climatic crisis and emerge as the End Times world leader prophesied in scripture, perhaps around 2026.

Who might the antichrist be? Maybe he will be the next Caliph of the Muslim world, postulated in one of the scenarios of the National Intelligence Council's report. This possibility is further suggested in scripture, which hints that the End Times antichrist will come from the Levant or Mesopotamia, or that portion of the Middle East occupied by the Arab Muslim nations of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Iraq.

At this point sacred text diverges from the secular as events unfold that begin the countdown to Armageddon.

The antichrist could consolidate his position over the following three and a half years (imagine Hitler avoiding or delaying the outbreak of war, or winning World War II rather than losing). The antichrist would then be given 'authority to act' for another three and a half years. Bible scholars commonly call this seven-year period the Tribulation. The antichrist would then meet his end at the Second Coming of Christ, perhaps around 2033 or 2035 (about the time that Strauss and Howe suggest the current Saeculum will end). This would be around two thousand years after Pentecost, the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem following the resurrection of the crucified Christ (around 33 or 35 A.D.). It was this event that Christians believe initiated the present Church Age, which is prophesied to end before or during the End Times cataclysms.

Scenario timeline:

History repeats,  
Cycles pulse to a familiar rhythm.  
The sons follow in the steps of their fathers –  
The names and the dates are changed,  
Yet the chorus remains always the same.

Psalms 24: 1 (NIV)  
The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it;

The following is a suggested timeline for this scenario:

2001 - - -: 9/11 and the War on Terrorism precipitates escalation of U.S. military involvement in the Middle East (current events). Real or perceived Western occupation of Arab Muslim lands and Western control of Middle East energy resources anger Muslim fundamentalists, enflaming a regional backlash against encroaching globalization and giving strength to long suppressed desires for a reunification of all Arab lands under a new Caliphate.

2010: Peaking oil production at a time of rapidly growing demand, increasing Muslim unrest in the Middle East, and terrorist attacks on oil infrastructure precipitate a steep climb in oil prices and trigger a sharp global economic decline, which serves as the catalyst for the next Fourth

Turning. Over the following decade, societies begin to adjust to the new global order. For America, as well as other post-industrial Western societies, adjustment takes the form of drastic enforced energy conservation, energy rationing, and heavy investment in alternate energy technologies, which prove inadequate to replace non-existent cheap foreign oil. Severe and abrupt changes in the climate aggravate conditions, especially in Western Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Drastic declines in economic and energy resources result in abandonment of entitlements and curtailment of social programs (such as Social Security and Medicare). America is hit hard. Western Europe, with its greater dependency on foreign energy sources, aging population and deeply entrenched social-welfare systems, is hit harder. The disappearance of the welfare state generates the need for new social structures. Some societies successfully coalesce around these new structures, while others fragment.

Societies characterized by racial, cultural and ethnic diversity, such as America and increasingly Europe, will be especially stressed. Minorities will perceive (rightly or wrongly) that they are increasingly disenfranchised, or will see opportunities to gain advantage, in the social regeneration process. Civil strife along racial, cultural or ethnic lines, and possibly civil wars, result.

All societies will most likely develop a xenophobic backlash to globalization, which was a characteristic of the last Fourth Turning. This backlash could include erection of trade barriers, curtailment of immigration, possible deportation or imprisonment of illegal aliens, and low tolerances for diversity of all types. Increasing global terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction exacerbate this xenophobia. Old international alignments disintegrate and new ones emerge.

2022: Over the previous decade competition for declining oil production, in an environment of growing Muslim unrest and increasing terrorist attacks on oil infrastructure, accelerate the emergence of the Caliphate movement. The movement quickly gains strength under a charismatic and politically savvy leader (or Caliph). This Caliph is the antichrist, who is described by scripture as bold, strong-willed and uncommonly skilled in flattery and intrigue, all qualities of successful global leaders of the past. This Caliph/antichrist unites the Arab nations of the Levant and Mesopotamia (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq) and the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia and the minor Gulf States). At the same time he establishes close political, economic and military alliances with Turkey and the Caucasian nations to the north, the Persian Axis (Iran - Afghanistan - Pakistan) and the Central Asian (Muslim) republics to the east, and the North African (Muslim) nations to the west, thus stabilizing the region and creating a Muslim coalition that stands on a near-equal footing with Europe, Russia, China, India, and other potential regional or global powers. This coalition controls most of the world's readily extractible oil reserves. Europe capitulates to the antichrist in order to guarantee its energy supplies and foreign trade markets. America's control over Middle East energy resources ends and America is forced to curtail its position as the world's only hyper-power. China and India

emerge as economic and military super-powers. The antichrist – the new Caliph of the reunited Arab lands – dominates the global oil market and therefore the global economy. Russia gains prominence as the only major energy supplier outside of Antichrist's immediate control.

2026: The antichrist imposes a peace treaty between Israel and its Arab neighbors. He allows Israel to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, perhaps motivated by a desire to enhance his reputation as a global leader and a great peacemaker. These events are considered by many Christians as prime signs of the beginning of the Seven Year Tribulation.

The antichrist's allies oppose this treaty and attack Israel. God delivers Israel by quickly destroying eight-five percent of the attacking armies. While many recognize God's hand in Israel's deliverance, the antichrist claims credit for the victory and deceives the world, including many Jews, Muslims and Christians, thus enhancing his reputation as a powerful world leader and (false) messiah.

2027: The antichrist's real and perceived triumphs result in a brief period of geopolitical calm. The world breathes a collective sigh of relief, believing that a crisis has been averted. From a position of strength, the antichrist can guarantee the security of energy resources and greater stability in the flow of oil, though at prices, and to markets, dictated by him. China and India continue to emerge as economic and military super-powers, competing with America and Europe for energy resources, enriching the Caliphate and weakening the Western powers.

2029: The antichrist breaks his treaty with Israel, occupies Jerusalem and the Temple, and demands worship (he is, after all, the anti-Christ). God pours out seven Trumpet Plagues, removing all Christian believers, living and dead, to heaven, at the Seventh Trumpet (the Resurrection and the Rapture of the faithful, or grain harvest). These events trigger a global war as the antichrist sees his power threatened (the grape harvest). This war involves another attack by the antichrist's former allies, reinforced by China and India hoping at long last to secure control of Middle East oil supplies. Scriptural descriptions of this war suggest unrestrained use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and the destruction of one-third of humanity. God then pours out His Wrath upon rebellious humanity with the seven Bowl Plagues.

2033: The antichrist unites the armies of the world, gathers them in Northern Israel (Megiddo), and attacks Jerusalem, hoping to defeat God's plan for the redemption of the world, which includes the fulfillment of God's promises that Israel will feature prominently in the Millennial Kingdom. Christ returns, descending from heaven to the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem from which he ascended to heaven about two thousand years prior. He quickly defeats Israel's enemies, reclaims the earth, and establishes his Millennial Kingdom.

Wildcard

The above scenario assumes that America is unable or unwilling to maintain its commitment to the globalization process (a commitment it refused after World War I, which contributed then to the decline of the globalization process that began in the nineteenth century and subsequently derailed by World War I, the Great Depression and World War II). Another possibility could be that America maintains its ability and willingness, through the hard times ahead, to champion the globalizing role it assumed after World War II and continues to bear in the geo-political environment up to the present. It would do this by providing the security, the vision and the leadership necessary to extend globalization's reach into regions that remain disconnected from the global community – much of South America and Africa, and most of the Caribbean, the Balkans, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. (A thoughtful and provocative book that explores America's past, present and possible future role in the globalization process is "The Pentagon's New Map", by Thomas P. M. Barnett, Berkley Books, New York, 2004).

However, could this really make a difference? Prophecy is prophecy, and would not be prophecy if it did not come to pass. In the end, America's globalizing role can only facilitate the fulfillment of these End Times events.

America's commitment to globalization would indeed be stressed by the temptation to circle the wagons and let the rest of the world fend for itself. If America preserves its globalizing role, this may take the form of leadership in international coalitions formed to exploit energy resources from remote or unsettled areas (such as Central Asia and Africa) and providing technical, logistical and above all security (i.e. military) support. Likewise, America's military could continue to dissuade potential international or regional conflicts over control of these resources. Since energy, and above all oil, keeps the American economy and military functioning, any threat to American access to these resources anywhere in the world currently is, and would be, construed as a threat to America and, by extension, to the global community. However, rising demand and falling supply would seriously handicap the American economy and military and hinder America's leadership role in globalization.

All interpretations of prophecy that suggest an End Times one-world government and economy could be validated through the globalization process (not by conquest, but by continued participation by the nations in the free flows of information, technology, capital, goods, services and people throughout the world). This integration would be messy and somewhat convoluted. There would be no One-World Emperor governing from the top down in the historical, imperial sense; however, the antichrist could exercise power and influence through a voluntary (and sometimes not-so-voluntary) acceptance by globalized and globalizing societies and economies of an evolving set of rules for international interconnectedness.

Scripture suggests that the antichrist's rule will be fragile and brief, and not without dissention and challenges. His coalition will be a coalition of convenience motivated by a common hubris (men will not give up their sin) and, in the end, by a common threat (the second coming of Christ, who will conquer a rebellious humanity).

Under these conditions, the antichrist could exploit the globalization process and a strengthening of Pan-Arab unity to reshape the League of Arab States along the model of the European Union ('Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Mr. Antichrist, the freely elected president

of – '). He could then strengthen the European Union/Arab League alliance along Islamist cultural and theological lines, impose a peace treaty between Israel and its Arab neighbors, and allow Israel to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. As noted above, these events are considered by many Christians as prime signs of the beginning of the Seven Year Tribulation.

### Globalization and Prophecy: America's Role in the End Times

Globalization - the 'growing interconnectedness reflected in the expanded flows of information, technology, capital, goods, services and people throughout the world' (Mapping the Global Future, a report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project for the CIA (NIC 2004-13 December 2004))

Globalization. Humanity has dreamed of it and striven for it, from Babel after the Great Flood through the Age of Empires, and even to the end of the age. The One-World ethos is ingrained in us – humans were created dependent upon, and united with, each other. These are qualities that literally define us as a species and serve as the basis for our interactions with one another – family, marriage, society, nation, civilization and religion – without which men and women would be no more than the beast of the fields. Rugged individualism is largely a myth. Even our pioneering ancestors depended upon the civilizations they left behind for the tools of their survival – clothing, blankets, muskets, gunpowder, knives, axes, domesticated horses. A truly independent soul would be a naked man squatting in a cave, gnawing on a root and dying of an abscessed molar.

But like so much of what we are our ancient ancestors, in their pride and vanity, perverted and exploited our natural inclination toward unity to facilitate their rebellion toward God. So God denied our ancestors unity, though not their interdependence, and scattered them as tribes and nations throughout the world (Genesis, Chapter 11, verses 1 through 9).

Still, things will come full circle in the end. Another attempt at global unity will feature prominently in the End Times. But this unity will only be fully realized as it was in the beginning – a world united under the authority and lordship of God – in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. Much of Bible prophecy regarding the End Times supports this view. Nothing in prophecy refutes it.

The question is asked: Should America then champion globalization? Do we sin as a nation by facilitating the integration of nations into a global community?

The answer is: Such integration will occur with or without our help. God foresaw it and prophesied it in the Bible. Prophecy is prophecy, and would not be prophecy if it did not come true. In the end great evil will come of globalization, but need not.

Many Americans agree (at least in theory) that America should promote world peace, international security and cooperation, fairness and prosperity among the nations, and freedom of

choice for all the world's people. Globalization, with its paradigm, or model, for international cooperation and connectedness has been, since World War II, and is today, for good or ill, the observed outcome of America's efforts in these endeavors.

To a greater or lesser degree, most of the world's nations and peoples are now part of the growing global community that America champions. This despite our nation's many mistakes and failures along the way, our missteps and self-interested, self-blinding miscalculations that have drawn us much criticism from within our nation and from the global community we have helped create.

What people and nations do with the global community America has been instrumental in creating and (for the present) largely sustains – that is their choice, and their responsibility. The golden rule and all the rest apply. God's paradigm, or model, for how the world should work never changes. He compels us to want for our neighbor what we want for ourselves (peace, security, cooperation, fairness, prosperity, freedom). He compels us to ease our neighbor's pain, and uplift our neighbor's spirit, whenever and wherever we can.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.' (Matthew, Chapter 5, verse 9). The Devil take the rest.

### Conclusion

The fascinating thing to note is how Strauss' and Howe's timing of the Fourth Turning of the current Saeculum, together with the substance, implications and timing of National Intelligence Council's possible future scenarios and Swartz's and Randall's possible climate change scenarios, converge with the End Times prophecies of the Bible, the Seven Year Tribulation, and the two thousandth anniversary of the Church Age (about 2030 to 2035). The visionings of historians, futurist and analysts (modern-day secular 'prophets') indeed increasingly read like the End Times visionings of the ancient prophets of scripture.

While we ought not ascribe too much importance to setting dates to the End Times prophecies, all of this should give middle-of-the road doubters, as well as naysayers on all sides of the religious street, reason to pause and reflect. Secular and sacred prophecies, like two semis loaded with gasoline, are barreling along on converging courses, heading toward the same intersection.

It will be interesting to see what happens when they meet – but from a safe, safe distance.

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Chapter 21  
America  
(The beautiful?)

Ancient prophecies make clear that, at the end of the age, the global balance of economic, political and military power will be different than it is today. Indeed, at some point in the very near future we may see this shift begin to occur, if we do not see it happening now.

Today America is the world's preeminent – perhaps only – superpower. America's economy eclipses that of any other nation or confederation of nations. It alone has the military might and lifting capacity to wage multiple wars half a world beyond its borders. The security of Western civilization remains, at its foundation, America's responsibility. And America's championing of the integration of the world economy is the cornerstone of the globalization process.

For these and other reasons, the very nations that depend upon, and profit by, America's global reach criticize America as a bully and an aggressor. Others with regional ambitions frustrated by America's real and virtual presence in their back yards, if not at their doors, target its embassies, cities and citizens.

Barely a hundred years ago, America had only begun to seriously exercise its global reach. It did so in a world already dominated by powerful nations and empires. But then these powerful nations and empires warred with each other over the first half of the twentieth century; in Europe, and then in Asia, bids for regional and global dominance and hegemony sparked two world wars and many lesser conflicts, visiting wholesale destruction on the great and the not-so-great.

America, blessed with a strategic position between Europe and Asia and separated from each by broad oceans, remained largely untouched by these conflicts. Blessed also with abundant human and natural resources, America remained largely self-sufficient, producing most of what it needed. And blessed with a citizenry that, to a great extent, shared common values, religion, culture, language and history, America remained united. America therefore avoided most of war's destruction and disruption. It flourished, while Europe and Asia blasted themselves to rubble and dust.

In combination, the blessings of geography, resources and unity in large part ensured that America's eventual involvement in European and Asian wars would decide the outcomes in America's favor. America became the world's premier exporter of credit, raw materials and manufactured goods – the 'arsenal of democracy' to its allies, and an overwhelming military adversary to its enemies. Thus America emerged from half a century of global conflict victorious, virtually unscathed, wealthy, in possession of a vast military, and the only nation capable of leading the war-exhausted, democratic West in a subsequent forty-year standoff with the war-exhausted, communist East.

But today the oceans no longer protect America from its potential enemies. It is within reach of horrific weapons of mass destruction, from fuel laden commercial jets to radiological and biological dirty bombs to intercontinental nuclear-tipped missiles. America is no longer self-

sufficient but has gone from being a net exporter to a net importer of raw materials, energy, and manufactures. It has gone from an international creditor to being the world's preeminent debtor nation, dependant upon others (in particular China) for credit to service its national and consumer spending. And it is no longer united, but faces the prospect in coming decades of increasing divisions along ethnic, racial, cultural and religious lines.

America will not forever be the world's preeminent superpower. In the coming decades, America will need something more than fading memories of better times, or wishful thinking for the future, to guarantee its peace and safety.

Scripture suggests that, at the end of the age, the global balance of power will shift again to the Middle East. Once the epicenter of great empires and prophetic events, today the region is divided politically and militarily, but has great potential to become unified given the common language, culture, history and religion shared by most who live there. When the antichrist rises to exploit the great yearnings, the simmering frustrations, and the huge potential of the Middle East, the region will no longer be divided and weak, but united and strong. And it will control the flow of much of the world's oil at a time of diminishing supply and increasing demand.

All of this then could be the key to understanding how the balance of power will shift – from America to the antichrist. But however the shift occurs, it will occur. Scripture makes that much plain.

The question is asked: How will America fare in the End Times?

The answer is: America's to decide.

Some of the earliest European settlers of North America came to the New World to escape what they saw as the spiritual corruption of the Old. The Puritans arrived in what would be called New England with a hope that, by relocating to a new land, they could create a new society mirroring the Millennial Kingdom, and thereby serve as 'a light unto the world, a city upon a hill' (Matthew, Chapter 5, verses 14 through 16). Some even anticipated then the imminent Second Coming of Christ, saw the possibility of America as the redeemer nation, and speculated that, on American soil, would rest the New Jerusalem.

Now, in the opening decade of the twenty-first century, America struggles with its self-image, and with its image around the world. Once a bastion of Christian virtue, faith, freedom and free enterprise (at least in the minds of most Americans), today large and influential groups seek to remake America into a secular, multi-cultural, humanist society – a nation divorced from the Western cultural values and Christian God of America's founding. Many seek peace on any terms with America's avowed enemies in vain attempts to avoid sacrifice at home and abroad. Many seek to dilute personal and corporate social and moral responsibility by asserting personal freedom as the ultimate expression of civil rights. Many seek to discredit America's core values and national identity in the name of political correctness and multiculturalism. At the same time, most Americans are too preoccupied acquiring things, or too self-satisfied with the abundance of things we have, to care. Yet some do recognize all this for what it is – self-interest, self-

importance and self-righteousness – or a modern form of idolatry and the very spirit of human pride (hubris) that led to the fall of nations and empires past.

You do not believe this? Then ask yourself what sacrifices you are willing to make to ensure the survival of the nation when the value of the dollar plummets against the euro, the yen and the yuan and the cost of everything from Japanese automobiles to Chinese-made – everything else – skyrockets, not because of profiteering by big business but because we have gone too far into debt to each other and the world in order to have everything we want as individuals and as a nation.

Ask yourself what you will demand be done when the price of gasoline goes up to five dollars a gallon – eight dollars a gallon – ten dollars a gallon – not because of price gouging by the big oil companies, or even depletion of readily extractible oil reserves, but because foreign oil producers have taken a page from our own free enterprise rulebook and discovered they can sell their oil to Europe, India and China for two-hundred devalued American dollars a barrel.

Ask yourself the meaning of the following words:

'Congress shall make no laws  
respecting an establishment of religion,  
or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;  
or abridging the freedom of speech  
or of the press;  
or the right of the people peaceably to assemble to petition the  
Government for a redress of grievances.'  
(Constitution of the United States of America, Bill of Rights, First  
Amendment)

Do the first three lines guarantee freedom of religion? Or do they guarantee freedom from religion? It is curious how some very loud and influential groups in America insist that the First Amendment guarantees – indeed, requires – freedom from religion in our nation's public life, but at the same time guarantees freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly and protest.

Need I continue?

It would be wrong to say that America is at a crossroads. At the heights of power and prosperity, we have gone far down the path of dissolution, both materially and spiritually, and what we really need is to do is turn around and go back.

But not back to the good old days.

America was founded on faith in the God of the Bible, and on the principles of liberty and equality, yet for much of its history 'Christian America' enslaved and then segregated black Americans. It trumpeted loudly the protection of property rights and the rule of law, yet illegally evicted the Cherokee Nation from their lands and broke treaties with, and confiscated the lands of, all Native American peoples. Throughout the last half of the twentieth century America preached human rights and freedom, yet overthrew elected governments and propped up tyrants

and dictators to secure resources and markets. Today Americans proclaim tolerance and equality for all, yet within our own communities segregation by race and by wealth defines the social and economic landscape – not by law, but in fact.

The list of America's sins does not end here – the list is long. Much of what America was and is, was and is deplorable.

Yet much of what America was and is, was and is great. More people immigrate to America than leave. More seek political and religious asylum in America than flee. The high principles of our nation's founding – equality, liberty, rule of law, the work ethic, enterprise, and faith in God, to name but a few – were and are shining examples of good governance and citizenship to the world. This despite our failures to always live up to them ourselves.

We have the capacity to do better. But will we?

Earlier in this book I noted that Christianity is broad enough to include all peoples from all cultural backgrounds. And here I want to say that Americans are supremely capable of embracing all peoples from all cultural backgrounds. Indeed, much of the strength of both Christianity and America lies in diversity.

The true Church reaches out to all the world's peoples with the Gospel of God's Grace through His Son, Jesus Christ. Yet it is a faith of conviction and not of coercion, of invitation and not of intimidation. It embraces those who come into the fold, and it prays for the souls of those who refuse. But it allows all to make the decision for themselves – it has to – the faith does not work any other way.

And throughout its history, America has opened its borders to immigrants from every corner of the earth. Its record on this account is checkered – at times America has favored immigrants from one part of the world over another and treated new arrivals as 'others' – but in the end everyone who comes to America can, if they wish it, find a place in American society and opportunities to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Without a doubt both the Church and America have had trouble living up to the ideals of tolerance and acceptance that, at foundation, are nevertheless the strength of both. But neither the Church, nor America, can deny these ideals and be what it is.

Having said this, I make no apology for my firm belief that Christianity is the only true religion and the ultimate source of God's Favor. Nor do I make apology for suggesting that the dilution of America's core values and cultural background will gravely weaken its social foundation of 'one nation under God, indivisible'. We have only to read the Bible to realize that God has but one Plan for the redemption of humanity and the recreation of the earth – that is, the atoning work of Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit for the regeneration of our minds. We have only to look at nations around the world who's citizens are divided along cultural lines, with different values, traditions and institutions, and speaking different languages, to see the danger of taking diversity too far – Iraq comes to mind, as does Sudan and the former Yugoslavia.

As noted elsewhere in this book – and whether we like it or not – we each by nature identify ourselves as 'me' and others as 'you', as 'us' and 'them'. And at the center of our identity is our cultural background – the traditions, values, institutions and worldview that define us as

individuals and, when held in common with others, define us as families, as communities and as a nation. Culture is, for better or worse, at the core of how we describe 'who we are'. And we find, to a very great degree, that we are by nature quite tribal – we trust more those who are most 'like us', and we have little trust for the 'other'.

While tolerance for cultural diversity, and for individual freedom of choice, expression and religion, have important places in what it means to be 'American', an America no longer identified by the core traditions, values, institutions and worldview of its founding would no longer be America – it would be something else or, if multiculturalism and personal freedom are taken to extremes, it would be many 'something elses', with dire consequences for national unity and the common good.

'Rule of law' would then not be enough to preserve us as a nation. Neither unity nor society can be legislated, nor can loyalty or trust. Nor can tolerance be legislated, for that matter, nor can sacrifice for the common good. Indeed, without some commonly held traditions, values, institutions and worldview, there would be commonly recognizable 'common good'.

In his controversial book "Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity" (Simon & Schuster, 2004), political scientist and Harvard professor Samuel P. Huntington argues that America could face in coming years an erosion national strength, unity and will as elites aggressively attempt to dilute the nations traditional core values by promoting multiculturalism and diversity at the expense of America's traditional identity, at a time when large numbers of immigrants cross our borders and fail – indeed refuse – to assimilate into our traditional national culture. In his equally controversial book "Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order" (Simon & Schuster, 2003) Professor Huntington argues that, since the end of the Cold War, civilizations and religions have replaced political and economic ideologies as sources of international alignments, alliances, competition and conflict. If Professor Huntington is correct in his assertions, then the dilution of America's national, cultural and religious values and identities is placing the nation, as well as Western civilization, at a distinct disadvantage to unapologetically monolithic Islamic and East Asian (primarily Chinese) civilizations.

And this is occurring at a time when, as historian Naill Ferguson suggests in his book "Colossus, the Decline and Fall of the American Empire" (Penguin Books, 2004) that America may be losing its preeminent status as the world's primary superpower from a lack of national will to lead, even as it increasingly hitches its economic well being to the global economy.

All of this suggests that, in the coming decades, America must put its house in order or suffer the consequences. But just as ancient Israel abandoned its exclusive relationship with God and chased after false gods, so today America is abandoning its foundational spirit of 'in God we trust' and 'one nation under God'. It is abandoning its foundational traditions, values, institutions and worldview, and dissipating its spiritual strength and material wealth on the altar of irresponsible individualism and licentious personal freedom.

When (not if) the global balance of power shifts, one must wonder if it will happen at least in part because, in the opening decade of the twenty-first century, America continues down a path of dissolution. Some suggest that China's star will rise in the twenty-first century, even as America's passes its zenith and begins to set. Others look to India, the European Union, or a

resurgent Russian Federation. Any, and most likely all, of these will erode America's primacy in the coming decades. But at some point in the future a ten-nation confederation in the Middle East, united by the antichrist, will eclipse them all.

When that happens, America will become at best one of many regional powers competing for resources, for markets, and for security. It will with certainty no longer be able to dictate, through overwhelming economic, military or technological strength, the global policies that protect its citizens, bolster its economy, guarantee its prosperity, serve its interests or give it advantage. Indeed, it will face multiple challenges from multiple powers on more or less an equal footing, if not at a distinct disadvantage. Like formerly ascendant nations and empires before it, America could succumb to the rot of moral decay from within and fall to the pressures of rising powers from without.

How America fares as these shifts occur will depend not on its military or its economy, but on its relationship with God (Jeremiah, Chapter 18, verses 1 through 12).

In the final analysis, America's fate in the End Times will be determined by America's allegiance to or rebellion against God's Plan for the redemption of mankind and the renewal of the earth. This, at the end of the age, will be the only geopolitical paradigm, model, or explanation for how the world works that will matter. But it might be too much to hope that, as a nation, we will turn to the Bible as our guide for framing domestic and international policies. Current trends strongly suggest we will not.

Still, despite its flaws God may yet protect America in the End Times for the sake of the faithful. That nations will survive the coming Tribulation is suggested by scripture:

Isaiah 2: 1 – 4

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

In the last days

the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established  
as chief among the mountains;  
it will be raised above the hills,  
and all nations will stream to it.

Many peoples will come and say,

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob.  
He will teach us his ways,  
so that we may walk in his paths."

The law will go out from Zion,  
the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He will judge between the nations

and will settle disputes for many peoples.  
They will beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.

We can only hope and pray that Americans will be among the peoples that populate Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

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Chapter 22  
Potential End Times Timeline  
(Past, present and future history)

Tracking the progress of global trends through a study of past, present, and prophetic events.

Many attempt to anticipate (even predict) the future by studying past and present trends and projecting these into the future. A demographer seeking to develop population projections for a particular city, county, state, or nation might determine the rate of population increase over the last ten, twenty, fifty or one hundred years and project this rate into the future, perhaps modifying his or her projections by taking into consideration such things as past fluctuations in the rate of change, changing fertility rates and migration trends. However, anticipating the future remains largely guesswork, and such projections can prove totally inaccurate due to events the demographer cannot, with any certainty, anticipate (epidemics, wars, catastrophic natural disasters, etc.)

The Bible student, looking into the future, has the advantage of Bible prophecy, which provides at least a partial glimpse into what will be. The Bible student can therefore project (it may be better to say interpret) past and present trends along paths revealed in scripture and perhaps obtain a surer, if not necessarily a clearer, insight to what the future holds.

On a night in the not so distant future world leaders, newscasters and Middle East experts of every stripe and color will have but one hot topic to discuss, argue and dissect on the twenty-four hour cable news networks. On the Internet, bloggers will blog it; End Times web pages (including my own) will post it; and e-news outlets will upload it. Some preachers (especially those on television) will preach about it. And some Christians (too few, I fear) will pray about it.

The 'Baghdad Accords', or perhaps the 'Damascus Roadmap to Peace' – or what some recognize as the beginning of the 'Great Tribulation' – will be on everyone's minds and lips.

Does this scenario sound too fantastic to be true? Or does it sound uncomfortably probable – perhaps a bit too likely – given recent history, current events, and the implications of Bible prophecy?

Following is a brief summary of the past, present and prophetic events and trends discussed in this book which, when examined together, suggest that we may indeed be living in the End Times. Indeed, many who read these words may live to see the Conquering Christ

appearing in the clouds, and those readers who know Him as Lord and Savior may never experience physical death but rise to meet Him in the air.

Approach of the End Times  
Historic events that point to the approach of the Last Days

In the last days:

There will be increases in wars among the nations. (Matthew, Chapter 24, verses 6 and 7)

So great will be the bloodshed and destruction that, unless God interferes to end it, humanity could destroy itself. (Matthew, Chapter 24, verse 22)

Notes:

1. Of the world's 194 nations 145, or 75 percent, gained independence in the twentieth century, and 27, or 14 percent, gained independence since 1990 ('CIA World Factbook', 6/13/06, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fields/2088.html>)
2. Over fifty million people were systematically murdered in the twentieth century, which made it the bloodiest period in history. (Lewis M. Simons, 'Genocide and the Science of Proof', National Geographic, January, 2006, p. 28)

In the last days:

Israel will return to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Isaiah, Chapter 11, verses 10 through 16; Isaiah, Chapter 66, verses 7 through 10; Romans, Chapter 11, verses 25 through 28)

Note:

In 1948 Israel declared its independence, creating the first independent Jewish state in over two thousand years.

Israel will be hated by surrounding nations, and will be considered an obstacle to world peace. (Zechariah, Chapter 12, verses 2 and 3; Revelation, Chapter 12)

Note:

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been involved in numerous wars with its Arab neighbors and is continually under attack by terrorists seeking its destruction.

Israel will take back Jerusalem from the Gentiles. (Luke, Chapter 21, verse 24 (implied))

Note:

During the Six-Day War of 1967, Israeli forces occupied Jerusalem, unifying the city under Jewish sovereignty for the first time in over two thousand years.

In the last days:

There will be a rise in federations and of confederations of nations, as a new form of empire. (Daniel, Chapter 2, verses 40 through 45; Revelation, Chapter 13, verses 1 through 4; Revelation, Chapter 17 verses 1 through 15)

Notes:

1. At no time since Babel has an empire formed through a voluntary union of peoples (Genesis, Chapter 11, verses 1 through 9). All subsequent empires formed primarily through military conquests. The European Union could become a modern-day 'empire of the willing' – the first since Babel.
2. Modern federations and confederations include: the European Union (<http://europa.eu/>) and the League of Arab States (<http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/index.jsp>) in loose confederation as the Revived Roman Empire – the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership ([http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/euromed/](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/euromed/))

In the last days:

The Church will be persecuted. (Matthew, Chapter 24, verses 9)

Notes:

1. More Christians died during the twentieth century because they were Christians than in the previous nineteen centuries of Church history. (Center for Religious Freedom a division of Freedom House, Newsletter Nov. – Dec. 2002 [http://freedomhouse.org/religion/publications/newsletters/2002/Nov-Dec/newsletter\\_2002-Dec1.htm](http://freedomhouse.org/religion/publications/newsletters/2002/Nov-Dec/newsletter_2002-Dec1.htm))
2. Throughout the twentieth century, the Christian population of the Middle East declined dramatically as Christians emigrated to escape persecution and exclusion. In Turkey the Christian community dwindled from about two million to a few thousand; in Syria, from about a third of the population to less than ten percent; in Lebanon, from over half of the population to less than a third. In Iraq, over half the Christian population has left. Christians have also suffered persecution and exclusion in Egypt and in Palestine, and are targeted in the Sudanese civil war.

(The Middle East Quarterly, Winter 2001, Volume VIII, Number 1, Editors' Introduction: 'Why a Special Issue? Disappearing Christians of the Middle East' <http://www.meforum.org/article/487>)

In the last days:

There will be increases in apostate Christianity and apostate churches.  
(II Timothy, Chapter 3, verse 5; II Timothy, Chapter 4, verses 3 and 4; Jude, Chapter 1, verses 17 through 19)

Notes:

1. According to a report prepared by The Barna Group, entitled 'Americans Draw Theological Beliefs From Diverse Points of View', dated October 8, 2002, most American adults own a bible and identify themselves as Christians.

However:

- Most reject doctrines of original sin and the existence of Satan.
  - About half believe that enough good works can get someone into Heaven.
  - About half believe that truth can be discovered by means other than from the Bible.
  - Almost half believe that the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths.
  - Over a third believe Jesus Christ committed sins while He was on earth.  
(<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=122>)
2. According to the '1999 Gallup International Millennium Survey':
    - Most Americans, but less than half of Western Europeans, give God a high importance in their lives
    - About two-thirds of Americans, and only one-third of Western Europeans, believe there is a personal god
    - Only one-fifth of Americans and Western Europeans believe there is only one true religion  
(<http://www.gallup-international.com/>)

In the last days:

The gospel will be preached globally (missionaries, radio, television, internet, & mass print?).  
(Matthew, Chapter 24, verse 14; Revelation, Chapter 14, verse 6)

There will be increases in knowledge, travel, & understanding of the End Times prophecies.  
(Daniel, Chapter 12, verses 4 and 9; Acts, Chapter 2, verses 17 through 21)

Notes:

1. The first recorded circumnavigation of the globe, led by Ferdinand Magellan, required over 3 years to complete (August, 1519 – September, 1522). Today, the International Space Station orbits the earth about every 91 minutes.
2. The first air passenger flew in 1908 (for about half a minute). In 2005, world air carriers transported over 2,000,000,000 passengers.
3. According to some estimates, global literacy increased by over 50% between 1950 and 1999.
4. The Internet became generally available via the World Wide Web in 1991. By 2007, there were over a billion Internet users (almost 20% of world population).

There will be disbelief in the End Times prophecies.

(Matthew, Chapter 24, verses 37 through 39; I Thessalonians, Chapter 5, verses 3 and 4; II Peter, Chapter 3 verse 3)

There will be increases in unnatural affections & hatreds.

Matthew, Chapter 24, verse 12; II Timothy, Chapter 3, verses 1 through 5; Revelation, Chapter 13, verses 5 through 18)

In the last days:

There will be signs & wonders in the sky (modern knowledge of asteroids, & of their potential destructiveness?).

(Luke, Chapter 21, verse 25)

Note:

The first asteroid discovered was Ceres, in 1801; by 1980 scientist recognized that an asteroid strike might have caused the extinction of the dinosaurs; in 1981 the first conference was held on the hazards due to comets and asteroids.

('History of Asteroid Research and Spacewatch', Tom Gehrels, The Spacewatch Project, University of Arizona <http://spacewatch.lpl.arizona.edu/arsw.html>)

Current / near-future events? (2007 & beyond)

(Note: Significant deviations from this suggested pattern of future events might require additional analysis of events leading up to the Tribulation.)

America withdraws from Middle East entanglements and becomes preoccupied with its own problems - increasing national debt, oil shortages, declining economy, collapse of social security, terrorism at home, illegal aliens, etc.

Notes:

1. America is not mentioned in the bible, & it may not feature prominently in the events of End Times prophecy – I hope
2. America may soon enter a cyclical period of crisis that could end with the nation weakened (William Strauss & Neil Howe 'The Fourth Turning, an American Prophecy' Broadway Books, New York, 1998)

Iraq splits into Sunni, Shiia, and Kurdish autonomous areas – political base of the Anti-Christ? (Daniel, Chapter 7, verses 3 through 8; Revelation, Chapter 13, verses 2 and 17, and Chapters 16 and 17)

Notes:

1. Dr. Nimrod Raphaeli Kirkuk: 'Between Kurdish Separatism and Iraqi Federalism' 3/31/05 No.215 Middle East Media Research Institute [memri.org]
2. Peter W. Galbraith 'As Iraqis Celebrate, the Kurds Hesitate' The New York Times 2/1/05 [also reported in the Kurdistan Observer – [KurdistanObserver.com]
3. Thanassis Cambanis 'Fractured Iraq sees a Sunni call to arms' Boston Globe 3/27/05
4. Sam Dagher 'In Iraqi south, Shiites press for autonomy' Christian Science Monitor 8/6/07 [csmonitor.com]

European Union and Arab League work to stabilize the Middle East – Nebuchadnezzar's image, with feet of iron & clay?  
(Daniel, Chapter 2, verses 41 through 43)

Note:

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership [[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/euromed/](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/)]

Islamist influence in Europe grows as Muslims populate Europe & oil prices soar? Rise of Eurabia.

Notes:

1. Robert Spencer 'The Rise of "Eurabia" ' FrontPageMagazine.com 3/18/04,
2. Bat Ye'or 'European Fears of the Gathering Jihad' FrontPageMagazine.com 2/21/03,
3. Niall Ferguson 'Eurabia?' New York Times 4/4/04

Israel partners with this expanding Euro-Arab confederacy, distancing itself from America & seeking a closer relationship with Europe, as America's regional/global influence wanes?  
(Daniel, Chapter 9, verse 27)

Notes:

1. NATO update 2/23/05 'NATO Secretary General visits Israel to discuss greater cooperation' (nato.int)
2. European Union, External Relations, Israel (europa.eu.int)
3. Martin Walker Analysis: 'Israel weighing EU membership' United Press International 5/21/03
4. 'Foreign Ministry warns Israel, Europe on collision course' Haaretz Service and the Associated Press 10/13/04 (haaretz.com)

Asian nations compete with the West for resources – rise of the kings of the east?  
(Revelation, Chapter 16, verse 12)

Notes:

1. 'India And China: Oil-Patch Partners?' BusinessWeek Online 2/7/05 (businessweek.com)
2. 'China, India seek cooperation in global oil quest' Reuters 4/11/05
3. "China, India, and the other nations of non-OECD Asia (i.e. exclusive of Japan) are expected to experience combined economic growth of 5.5 percent per year between 2003 and 2030, the highest rate of growth in the world." – Energy Information Administration, U. S. Department of Energy, 'International Energy Outlook 2006', Chapter 3, World Oil Markets, p. 27, eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/pdf/0484(2006).pdf (accessed 9/26/06)
4. "China's petroleum imports are expected to grow four-fold from 2003 to 2030, with much of the increase coming from Persian Gulf suppliers." – Ibid, p. 25

Russia, in alliance with other nations, emerges as a global power – Gog/Magog?  
(Ezekiel, Chapters 38 and 39; Isaiah, Chapter 66, verses 18 and 19)

Notes:

1. Paul M. Kennedy 'Watch Out for the BRICs - Will Brazil, Russia, India, China Be Superpower?' The Seoul Times 4/27/05
2. F. William Engdahl 'Running into a 'BRIC wall' with Eurasia?' Energy Bulletin 1/7/05 (energybulletin.net)

Russia develops alliances in the Middle East.

Notes:

1. 'Putin reassures Israel over Iran' BBC News 4/23/05
2. 'Putin wants Moscow Mideast talks' CNN 4/27/05 (cnn.com)
3. Hisham Abu Taha 'Missile Sale to Syria Is No Threat to Israel, Says Putin' Aljazeera 4/23/05 (aljazeera.info/)

4. Lyuba Pronina 'Russia Says It's Ready to Arm Saudi Arabia' The Moscow Times 2/10/05 (themoscowtimes.com)
5. 'Saudi leader's visit to Russia brings key oil accord, closer ties' Center for Defense Information #10 - RW 272 9/4/03 (cdi.org)
6. 'Russia weighs relocation of Black Sea Fleet to Syria' EuroNews 8/08/07

Rise of Messianic Judaism, especially in Israel – the 144,000 tribulation servants?  
(Revelation, Chapter 7 (implied by future events described))

Notes:

1. U.S has about 100,000 Messianic Jews & over 200 Messianic congregations. Israel has about 50 Messianic congregations. Additional Messianic congregations exist in other countries (Religioustolerance.org )
2. Larry Derfner & Ksenia Svetlova 'Messianic Jews in Israel claim 10,000' The Jerusalem Post 4/28/05 (jpost.com)
3. Messianic Jewish web pages: Shalach Ministries (shalach.org/), Jews for Jesus (jewsforjesus.org)

#### Rise of the Antichrist and the False Prophet

(Daniel, Chapters 7 and 8; II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verses 1 through 4; Revelation, Chapters 13 and 17)

From one of the ten tribes of Israel settled by the Assyrians in the lands of the Medes – modern-day Kurdistan? Little horn that subdues 3 horns: (Turkey, Syria, Iran after Kurdistan gains independence upon break-up of Iraq?) Leopard (Empire of Greece), bear (Empire of Media), & lion (Empire of Babylon) – geography of the easternmost reaches of the Roman Empire – modern Lebanon, Syria & Iraq.

(Daniel, Chapter 7, verses 3 through 8; Revelation, Chapter 13, verses 2 and 17, and Chapter 17, verses 16 and 17)

Note:

Ancient Jewish & Christian historians placed the ten tribes of Israel in the Mountains of Medea, east of the Euphrates, in the regions of N. Iraq, N. Iran, N. Afghanistan, & Central Asia [Grant R. Jeffery 'Apocalypse: The Coming Judgment of the Nations', Bantam edition, New York, 1994)

The next Pan-Arabic or Pan-Muslim leader?

Notes:

1. National Intelligence Council 'Mapping the Global Future' 12/04, 'Fictional Scenario: A New Caliphate' (cia.gov)

2. Khilafah.com – 'what is the khilafah?'
3. The Heritage Foundation (heritage.org/), word search 'khilafah'

Scripture suggests that Eurabia may be the seventh empire to have dealings with Israel as a sovereign nation (Nebchadnezzar's feet of iron & clay) and that Anti-Christ's kingdom will be the 8th (Revelation, Chapter 17, verses 9 through 13). If Eurabia is the Revived Roman Empire, then the antichrist most likely will not be its leader, but the leader of a separate ten-nation confederation.

The antichrist becomes the leader of all or part of the Arab League – the ten kings who give heir authority to the antichrist?

(Revelation, Chapter 17, verses 10 through 14, and verses 16 and 17)

The antichrist gains great influence in the West (European Union) & in the Middle East.

(Revelation, Chapter 13, verses 1 and 2)

He extends influence throughout the world.

(Revelation, Chapter 13, verses 3 and 4)

He ushers in a period of temporary peace & prosperity (based on free-flowing, but expensive, oil?).

(Matthew, Chapter 24, verses 37 through 39; I Thessalonians, Chapter 5, verse 3)

Notes:

1. By the third decade of the twenty-first century, the Middle East could supply almost half of the oil available on global markets and possess almost half the world's oil reserves. – Energy Information Administration, U. S. Department of Energy, 'International Energy Outlook 2006', Chapter 3, World Oil Markets [eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/pdf/0484\(2006\).pdf](http://eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/pdf/0484(2006).pdf) (accessed 9/26/06)
2. 'The United States was responsible for 8% of the world's petroleum production, held 2% of the world's crude oil reserves, and consumed 25% of the world's petroleum consumption in 2005. The Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) held 70% of the world's crude oil reserves and produced 41% of world petroleum.' – U. S. Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Fact #432: July 10, 2006, World Oil Reserves, Production, and Consumption, [1.eere.energy.gov/vehiclesandfuels/facts/2006\\_fcvt\\_fotw432.html](http://1.eere.energy.gov/vehiclesandfuels/facts/2006_fcvt_fotw432.html)

### Seven Year Tribulation

Anti-Christ & False Prophet make a 7-year security alliance with Israel

(Daniel, Chapter 9, verse 27)

Jerusalem internationalized? (Outer courts of the temple given over to the Gentiles)  
(Revelation, Chapter 11, verses 1 and 2)

Note:

In 1947, the United Nations suggested internationalizing Jerusalem as part of the partitioning of Palestine – United Nations ([un.org/Depts/dpa/ngo/history.html](http://un.org/Depts/dpa/ngo/history.html))

Anti-Christ & False Prophet establish a new world order, based on Middle East, an economic union between European and Arabia (Eurabia?), and a new/old religion (demagoguery & demon worship), and begin to pressure the faithful (Jew, Christian & Muslim?).  
(Revelation, Chapter 13, verses 11 through 18)

Secular Israel grows wealthy at the center of world political, economic & religious commerce?  
(Mystery Babylon?), & trades with Persian Gulf States?  
(Ezekiel, Chapter 38, verses 12 and 13)

Notes:

1. "A recent agreement between Russia and Israel will soon allow Russia to supply the Asian markets with crude oil through the Trans-Israel Pipeline (TIPLINE), a 150-mile pipeline running straight through Israel, thus breaking for the short term the Saudi near-monopoly on oil sales to East Asia, the world's fastest growing energy market." 'A shortcut for Russian oil to Asia' Energy Security 3/21/04  
[<http://www.iags.org/n0331044.htm>]
2. "Now comes news that Turkey and Israel have reached a memo of understanding calling for a \$4 billion pipeline linking the Turkish port of Ceyhan and Israel's Ashkelon seaport, also on the Mediterranean coast. From there, oil and even badly needed water and electric power for Israel could be piped to Elath, Israel's port on the Gulf of Aqaba leading to the Red Sea." 'Turkey/Israel pipeline could shift Middle East power balance' by Morris R. Beschloss, The Desert Sun March 22, 2007

Mystery Babylon: Secular/apostate Judaism, centered in Jerusalem – the harlot who rides the seven empires (the seven-headed beast) with whom she fornicates:

1. Egypt, 2. Assyria, 3. Babylon, 4. Persia, 5. Grecia, 6. Rome

Church Age: Israel dispersed & the Church does God's work – the Mystery of God, hidden from the Jewish prophets.

(Romans, Chapter 11, verse 11; Colossians, Chapter 1, verses 25 through 27)

7. Eurabia? (After God gathers a part of Israel back into the Promised Land)

(Matthew, Chapter 23, verses 29 through 39; Revelation, Chapters 17 and 18; Isaiah, Chapter 1, verse 21; Jeremiah, Chapters 2 and 3; Ezekiel, Chapter 16; Hosea; Zechariah, Chapter, 5, verses 5 through 11)

### Gog-Magog war

Gog and allies (Turkey, Russia, Sudan, Libya, Iran, Central Asian nations, etc.) attack Israel, which has been 'gathered out of many people' and 'at rest, dwelling in safety' in 'unwalled cities' (Ezekiel, Chapters 38 and 39); Isaiah, Chapter 66, verses 18 and 19).

Gog is attacked by God (earthquake, thunder, disease, torrential rain, hail, fire, brimstone) and driven into the mountains of Israel before reaching Jerusalem, and fire rains down on allied nations. Terror and panic grip Gog's armies, which attack each other. Gog, and eighty-five percent of Gog's forces, are destroyed in the mountains of Israel. (Ezekiel, Chapter 38, verses 19 through 22, and Chapter 39; Zechariah, Chapter 12, verses 1 through 9)

Many Israelis turn to God, recognizing His hand in Gog's defeat. (Ezekiel, Chapter 39; Zechariah, Chapter 12, verse 10)

Israel cleans up the war debris. (Ezekiel, Chapter 39)

Israel rebuilds the Temple in Jerusalem? (Daniel, Chapter 12, verse 11; Matthew, Chapter 24, verse 15; Mark, Chapter 13, verse 14; II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verses 3 and 4)

The antichrist and false prophet take credit for Gog's defeat, deceiving many Jews, Christians, Muslims, etc. (Revelation, Chapter 13, verses 12 through 14)

#### Notes:

Jewish, Muslim, & even Christian beliefs about the Messiah are varied, to include denial of the Messiah's divinity or that Jesus is the Christ, allowing Anti-Christ and the False Prophet to deceive of many.

(II Corinthians, Chapter 11, verses 13 through 15; II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verses 9 through 12; Revelation, Chapter 19, verse 20)

See also:

[www.jewishencyclopedia.com](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com) – word search 'Armilus'

www.wikipedia.org/ & answers.com – word search 'Christian eschatology', 'Jewish eschatology' & 'Islamic eschatology'

First Half of the Tribulation  
The Church is tested

Persecution of the Faithful Church.

(Matthew, Chapter 24, verses 9 through 14; Revelation, Chapter 6, verses 7 through 11; Revelation, Chapter 7, verses 13 through 17; Revelation, Chapter 10, verses 1 through 7; Revelation, Chapter 13, verses 9 and 10; Revelation, Chapter 14, verse 13)

Many are enticed away from the faith by the antichrist's deceptions, or abandon the faith to avoid persecution. Many who remain faithful are imprisoned and/or killed.

Note:

Christ's parable of the ten virgins, five foolish (without extra oil) and five wise (with extra oil), might suggest that Christians today should prepare themselves against the possibility that they may have to endure Tribulation persecutions.

(Matthew, Chapter 25, verses 1 through 13)

The Two Witnesses prophesy in apostate Jerusalem for 1,260 days.

(Revelation, Chapter 11, verses 3 through 11)

First four Trumpets:

(1.) Hail & fire destroys a third of vegetation (meteoroids?)

(2.) A mountain of fire (asteroid?) fouls a third of 'the sea' (Western Mediterranean? All the world's oceans?), and destroys a third of life in the sea, and a third of ships on the sea

(3.) A third of fresh waters poisoned, and many die drinking this water (acid rain fallout from the asteroid strike?)

(4.) A third of the light of sun, moon & stars is dimmed (global dust clouds?)

(Revelation, Chapter 8, verses 7 through 13; Matthew, Chapter 24, verse 29; Mark, Chapter 13, verses 24 and 25; Luke, Chapter 21, verse 25)

Fifth Trumpet:

(First Woe) Satan cast to earth & opens the bottomless pit, unleashing smoke & darkness (super-volcanic eruption in Yellowstone, Indonesia, etc.?). Abaddon the destroyer, & many demons, released from hell, and torment unbelievers for five months.

(Revelation, Chapter 9, verses 1 through 12)

Sixth Trumpet:

(Second Woe) Release of the 4 angels bound in the Euphrates River (Kurdistan – Kurds; Turkey – Turkmen; Syria – Arabs; and Iraq – Arabs and Persians?) – attack of 200,000,000 warriors who will, by the end of the tribulation, kill a third of humanity (biological, chemical & nuclear weapons?).

(Revelation, Chapter 9, verses 13 through 19)

Notes:

1. Oceans, lakes and rivers often represent nations and peoples in Bible prophecy
2. Military manpower of Anti-Christ's kingdom and allies (Arab League and the European Union) in 2004: over 180 million (men aged 15-49: 'CIA World Fact Book' '04 – cia.gov)
3. Control of Russian, Iranian and Central Asian oil and gas resources would give the antichrist control of most of the world's oil and gas reserves and production capacity).

The Two Witnesses killed in Jerusalem (which is likened unto Sodom and Egypt) by the beast from the bottomless pit (Abaddon, - released in the Fifth Trumpet plague?) and resurrected three days later (at the Seventh Trumpet?).

(Revelation, Chapter 11, verses 7 through 11)

Seventh, & last, Trumpet:

(3rd Woe)

(Revelation, Chapter 11, verses 15 through 19)

The Mystery of God is accomplished?

(Revelation, Chapter 10, verse 7)

The resurrection of the dead in Christ occurs?

(1Corinthians, Chapter 15, verses 20 through 24 and verses 51 through 53)

The rapture of the Church occurs?

(Matthew, Chapter 24, verse 31; I Thessalonians, Chapter 4, verses 15 through 17; Revelation, Chapter 15, verses 2 through 5)

The resurrection of the Two Witnesses occurs?

(Revelation, Chapter 11, verses 11 and 12)

The Holy Spirit is taken out of the way?

(II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verses 6 through 8)

Christ is coming.

(Revelation, Chapter 11, verses 15 through 18)

Lightening, thunder, earthquake, and hail

(Revelation, Chapter 11, verse 19)

The Harvest of the Righteous (grain harvest) occurs?

(Revelation, Chapter 14, verse 14 through 16)

Second Half of the Tribulation  
Israel is tested

The redeemed in Heaven witness the Vials of Wrath poured out on unrepentant humanity.  
(Revelation, Chapter 15, verses 1 through 4)

Note:

Without the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, humanity will not repent of sin and turn to God.

(John, Chapter 16, verses 7 through 11; Romans, Chapter 8, verses 5 through 16; I Corinthians, Chapter 2, verses 14 through 16; II Corinthians, Chapter 1, verses 22 and 23, and Chapter 3, verses 16 through 18; Galatians, Chapter 4, verse 6; Ephesians, Chapter 1 verses 13 and 14 and Chapter 4, verse 30)

Global war – A third of humanity is killed by fire, smoke & brimstone (weapons of mass destruction?), by disease, and by famine.

(Revelation, Chapter 6, verses 1 through 9; Revelation, Chapter 9, verses 13 through 19)

Beginning of the Harvest of the Wicked (grape harvest – wine of God's wrath)?

(Revelation, Chapter 14, verse 10, and verses 17 through 20; Isaiah, Chapter 63, verses 1 through 4; Joel, Chapter 2, verses 12 through 14)

The antichrist is given authority to act for forty-two months.

(Revelation, Chapter 13, verse 5)

The antichrist rules from Jerusalem.

(Daniel, Chapter 7, verses 23 through 25; Revelation, Chapter 11, verse 2)

The antichrist is revealed to be a false messiah (upon removal of that which restrains him – the Two Witnesses, the Holy Spirit & the true Church, at the 7th Trumpet)?

(II Thessalonians, Chapter 2, verses 6 through 8)

First Five Vials of God's Wrath: Reserved for rebellious humanity & poured out after the rapture  
(Romans, Chapter 2, verses 5 through 11; Revelation, Chapter 11, verse 18):

(1.) A terrible disease comes upon followers of the Beast (the faithful are gone)

(Zechariah, Chapter 14, verses 12 and 13)

(2.) The oceans die (Mediterranean? All?)

(3.) The fresh waters completely polluted

(4.) The sun scorches the flesh of men

(5.) Physical (& spiritual?) darkness falls upon the earth (the light of the world – the Church – is gone)

(Revelation, Chapter 16, verses 1 through 11)

Israel is attacked by the surrounding Islamic nations (the antichrist's reaction to Israel's Messianic revival?)

(Zechariah, Chapters 12 through 14)

Two-thirds of Israelis are killed, but a third are protected by God (the purified remnant).

(Zechariah, Chapter 13, verse 7, through Chapter 14, verse 5).

Mystery Babylon/Jerusalem (secular/apostate Judaism: the Great Harlot & Mother of Harlots) is sacked by the ten kings allied to the antichrist.

(Revelation, Chapter 17, verses 16 and 17)

Half of the population of Jerusalem is taken captive.

(Zechariah, Chapter 14, verses 1 and 2)

The remaining population is called out of Mystery Babylon/Jerusalem.

(Revelation, Chapter 18, verse 4)

Those who respond to this call are rescued by God.

(Zechariah, Chapter 14, verses 3 through 5)

Disease, terror & panic overtake the attackers.

(Zechariah, Chapter 14, verses 12 and 13; Joel, Chapter 3)

#### Sixth Vial:

The Euphrates River dries up (the antichrist's empire is weakened by war and pestilence?) allowing the (oil-hungry?) kings of the east to march westward (China, India, etc.?).

Isaiah, Chapter 11, versed 15 through 16; Revelation, Chapter 16, verse 12

All the tribes of Israel, return to reclaim their inheritance?

(Isaiah, Chapter 11, verses 11 through 16, and Chapter 63, verses 16 through 19; Ezekiel, Chapter 37, verses 15 through 22; Zechariah, Chapter 10, verses 6 through 10; Acts, Chapter 26, verses 6 and 7; Revelation, Chapter 7, verses 4 through 8)

Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet summon the rulers of the earth and their armies to Armageddon, to oppose Christ's coming.

(Revelation, Chapter 16, verses 12 through 16)

Seventh Vial:

Thunder, lightening, earthquake – the destruction of Babylon (Apostate Jerusalem?), and the destruction of cities, coasts, islands & mountains. 100 pound hail stones fall upon humanity, who curse God.

(Revelation, Chapter 16, verses 17 through 21)

Unrepentant humanity mourns the loss of Babylon's (Jerusalem's?) wealth.

(Revelation, Chapter 18, verses 9 through 18)

Christ Returns

Christ returns to reclaim the earth. He casts the antichrist and the false prophet into the Lake of Fire. He destroys the gathered kings and their armies with His Word. He binds Satan in Hell for a thousand years and establishes His Kingdom throughout all the earth (the Millennial Kingdom).

(Revelation, Chapter 16, verses 17 through 21, and Chapter 19, verses 19 through Chapter 20, verse 3)