



UPDATED
AND
EXPANDED!

THE
LATE
GREAT
UNITED STATES

What Bible Prophecy Reveals About
America's Last Days

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I think there is an unspoken subtext in our national political culture right now.

In fact I think it's a subtext to our society.

I think that a lot of people are carrying around in their heads, unarticulated and even in some cases unnoticed, a sense that the wheels are coming off the trolley and the trolley off the tracks.

—Peggy Noonan, *Wall Street Journal*

We are in a country in debt and in decline— not terminal, not irreversible, but in decline.

Our political system seems incapable of producing long-range answers to big problems or big opportunities.

—Thomas L. Freedman, *New York Times*

The world has shifted from anti-Americanism to post-Americanism... The distribution of power is shifting, moving away from American dominance.”

—Fareed Zakaria, *Newsweek*

THE QUESTION EVERYONE'S ASKING

I turn back to your prophets in the Old Testament and the signs foretelling Armageddon, and I find myself wondering if we are the generation that is going to see that come about. I don't know if you have noted any of those prophecies lately, but, believe me, they describe the times we are going through.

—President Ronald Reagan, 1983

Suppose someone wrote and published the ultimate compendium of music history...but left out any mention of Beethoven, the Beatles, or Garth Brooks.

Or the French produced a video tour of Paris...with nary a glimpse of Notre Dame, the Louvre, or the Eiffel Tower.

Imagine a math textbook containing an entire year's curriculum...never once using or discussing the number one.

When an authoritative resource claims expertise in a particular field of knowledge, we usually expect it to touch on the most prominent subjects within its purview. That's why so many Christians read their Bibles—and biblical prophetic passages in particular—fully confident that it must somehow reveal something about the role of America in the end times. After all, God,

who exists in all times, who sees the end of history from the beginning, who indeed sovereignly governs every moment of history—God, who reveals key end-time events in the prophecies of Scripture, can't possibly have omitted from His opus the most powerful, most influential, and by many counts most God-blessed of all nations that have ever risen.

Can He?

By any standard of measurement, America occupies center stage in the world arena. No one disputes the fact that America has a distinctive history, during which it has risen to dominate global affairs. In a quarter of a millennium it has become a nation unlike any other in the history of the world. It has superseded nations with much longer histories. No nation in the history of civilization has exercised greater influence than the United States of America—politically, militarily, economically, culturally, linguistically, and possibly even religiously. As the old saying goes, “When America sneezes, the world catches a cold.”

Most of America's ascent has happened in less than one hundred years. America's awe-inspiring rise to superpower status in the twentieth century accelerated to maximum upward velocity in the aftermath of WWII. In an ironic twist, the war's tragic losses delivered America from the poverty of the Great Depression. The United States emerged from WWII better off militarily, politically, and economically than any other nation. Even during the dark days of the cold war, America had the upper hand on the Soviet Union, as was finally proven in the early 1990s when the Soviet Empire unraveled at the seams and America found herself alone at the top.

The Last Superpower

Today, America prevails as the world's lone superpower. The last contender standing. But the “champ's” reign hasn't been the smooth ride that many optimistically envisioned. From the 1950s through the 1980s, many believed

that the demise of the Soviet Union would ensure greater global security. Americans envisioned a brave new world free from the tyranny of Soviet communism. Like many dreams, top-dog status hasn't been what most people expected.

We inaugurated the single-superpower era with the first Gulf War in the early 1990s. Operation Desert Storm was a glowing success. The future looked bright. But then the real trouble started. The underground-garage bombing of the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993, was the first assault of Islamic terror on American soil—a dark omen of things to come. Gathering storm clouds loomed closer with the suicide bombing attack on the USS *Cole* in 2000.

Then dawned the darkest day in American history—the devastating attack of 9/11—plunging America headlong into the age of radical Islamic jihad. Radical Islam declared open war on the United States. The stunning attack gripped the nation, a portent of many more to come.

America and its allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and launched the Iraq War in 2003—a war that has cost trillions of dollars and thousands of lives.

And most recently? Economic meltdown. Skyrocketing oil prices. The subprime mortgage crisis. The dollar's devaluation to all-time lows. Foreign nations, awash in oil money, buying major U.S. financial institutions. Runaway deficits and an out-of-control federal budget. Smothering debt. The looming threat of radical Islam.

And the worst fear of all—weapons of mass destruction on American soil.

Many are openly saying that anything less than victory in the currently festering conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan will weaken America's resolve, embolden the jihadists, and force the United States to abdicate its role as world leader and to retreat into isolation.

America's past is glorious and inspiring. Its present is unstable, yet stud-ded with glimmers of cautious optimism.

But what of the future? Is there any sure word?

Americans, the Future, and the Bible

The increasingly frantic tempo of change in modern life fosters a global sense of impending crisis. People everywhere fear that the world is moving rapidly toward some calamity—possibly even a finale. I'm sure you've sometimes wondered what's going to come of all the danger, uncertainty, and instability. How long can the tensions be held in check? How long until the lid blows off? Terrorism—that Bad Thing that used to happen in other places—has rudely intruded into the life of every American. U.S. troops are still in Iraq, still in Afghanistan. Some predict that we might realistically be there for ten years or longer. The epochal conflict with jihadist terror is still in its infancy. What happens when it grows up?

The danger and uncertainty of modern civilization has caused people from all walks of life to ask forward-peering questions as never before. Solemn questions. Searching questions. Questions about the Middle East. Terrorism. Radical Islam. Israel. Global pandemics. Drastic weather changes. Questions about the future.

But the real issue that seems to lurk, thinly veiled, behind all these questions is, Could we be nearing closing time? The Bible is the only authority for addressing this question, and Americans seem to be discussing biblical prophecy more than ever before. Many believe that the Bible contains the answers about earth's final days.

Here's a brief sample of what Americans believe about the book of Revelation and the end times:

- 59 percent believe that the prophecies in Revelation are going to come true.
- Nearly 25 percent believe that the Bible predicted the September 11 attack.
- 35 percent are paying more attention to how news events might relate to the end of the world.

- 17 percent believe the end of the world will happen in their lifetime.¹

It's clear that most Americans look to the Bible as an accurate guide for the future. It's also evident that the collective American angst about our world's destiny is building. The fuse is lit. There's fire in the hole. Now we're just wondering how long till it's all gonna blow.

As we look into the pages of the Bible, we quickly discover that, as alarming as current events might be, they don't surprise God. The geopolitical situation we see today in the headlines bears a remarkable correspondence to the trend of world events that Bible prophecies foretold millennia ago. As we probe God's Word for clues, we discover the "You Are Here" arrow marking our current position in God's unfolding program, and we notice that some predicted events may occur in our lifetime. Prophecies, which in the past were sometimes carelessly brushed aside as unbelievable, are sparking renewed interest. But perhaps no issue has created more interest than the possible role of America in the end times. This is the question that people everywhere are asking. It's the question that this book will seek to answer.

Inquiring Minds Want to Know

On January 29, 2008, I had the privilege of appearing on a national television program in Texas. After the program, one of the station employees gave me a ride to my next appointment. We talked as we drove, and I learned that he pastors a new church in the area. We discussed various aspects of pastoral ministry and church life, and before long the topic turned to Bible prophecy. As we neared our destination, he said, "There's one question that I have wondered about more than any other issue related to Bible prophecy." I knew what he was going to ask. "Where do you think America fits into biblical prophecy?"

I'm asked this question more—much more—than any other. People ask me this question at churches, at conferences, on radio and television programs. And as I have talked with my friends and colleagues who teach around

the United States and around the world, they confirm that the most-asked question in all of Bible prophecy is, What is America's role in the end times? Something inside us wants to know what will ultimately happen to this great land we call the United States of America.

Bible prophecy experts Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy address this nagging question:

“God bless America!” Is it a prayer, a promise, or a prophecy? We can see and hear the slogan in music, on bumper stickers, in casual conversations, in campaign rhetoric, at historic moments in our nation's life (both joyful and sorrowful), from podiums, in parades, and in a host of other public and religious forums. Will God bless the United States in the future? Is there any sure word of our nation's future in the Bible generally, and the prophetic passages specifically? It's amazing! One of the most frequently asked questions we receive is with regard to the role of the United States in Bible prophecy. Is it fact or fantasy?²

When you think about it, our interest in America's role in the end-of-the-world prophecies could be interpreted as a little self-centered. You rarely, if ever, hear someone wondering about the role of New Zealand, Scotland, Australia, Mexico, or Brazil in the end times. Don't the people in these nations matter as much as American citizens? Although our focus on America's destiny might be considered arrogant by non-Americans, it is nevertheless legitimate, because the United States is the most powerful nation in history and the lone surviving superpower in the world today.

Nothing New

The question about America and biblical prophecy goes way back in our history. I don't know who first raised it, but it was certainly in the air in the

nineteenth century. In 1859, Frances Rolleston authored a work titled *Notes on the Apocalypse, as Explained by the Hebrew Scriptures: The Place in Prophecy of America and Australia Being Pointed Out*. Rolleston made the case that America was the two-horned beast in Revelation 13.³ In 1884, Uriah Smith wrote a book titled *The United States in the Light of Prophecy; or, An Exposition of Rev. 13:11–17*. (Authors back then loved long titles.) For Smith it was unthinkable that the United States would not be mentioned in the Bible. He said, “The question naturally arises, what part has the United States to act in these scenes? For it must seem reasonable and probable that a nation which has risen as suddenly as ours, and made such unparalleled progress, must be a subject of divine prophecy.”⁴ Smith also maintained that America was the beast of Revelation 13:11–17—a view that seems to have prevailed in that day.

Many theories have sprung up since that time. (We’ll explore a few of them in depth in the next chapter.) History reveals that people in every generation since the founding of this great nation have wondered about America’s future.

We live in interesting times; it’s no wonder that the topic attracts ever more fascination.

Is the Whole Thing Going to Fall Apart?

Few may ask this question audibly, but many of us ponder it in the hidden corridors of our minds. Peggy Noonan relates the following poignant story, expressing the foreboding of many Americans today.

A few weeks ago I was reading Christopher Lawford’s lovely, candid and affectionate remembrance of growing up in a particular time and place with a particular family, the Kennedys, circa roughly 1950–2000. It’s called “Symptoms of Withdrawal.” At the end he quotes his Uncle Teddy. Christopher, Ted Kennedy and a few family members had

gathered one night and were having a drink in Mr. Lawford's mother's apartment in Manhattan. Teddy was expansive. If he hadn't gone into politics he would have been an opera singer, he told them, and visited small Italian villages and had pasta every day for lunch. "Singing at la Scala in front of three thousand people throwing flowers at you. Then going out for dinner and having more pasta." Everyone was laughing. Then, writes Mr. Lawford, Teddy "took a long, slow gulp of his vodka and tonic, thought for a moment, and changed tack. 'I'm glad I'm not going to be around when you guys are my age.' I asked him why, and he said, 'Because when you guys are my age, the whole thing is going to fall apart.'"

Mr. Lawford continued, "The statement hung there, suspended in the realm of 'maybe we shouldn't go there.' Nobody wanted to touch it. After a few moments of heavy silence, my uncle moved on."⁵

One might be tempted to conclude, "If Ted Kennedy knows that things are going to fall apart, then shouldn't the rest of us?" Maybe we do. Maybe that's why our pop culture has gone apocalyptic. Maybe we all sense that the train has derailed but we just don't want to admit it. We'd rather spend our remaining moments of sweet denial—as the cars plummet from the railroad bridge to the valley floor—enjoying our coffee and Sudoku.

What *does* lie ahead? I'm sure that at one time or another you've wondered where America is headed. You may have asked yourself questions like these:

- Does the Bible have anything to say about America in the last days?
- How could the United States fit into God's prophetic program?
- Will America survive?
- Will the United States be sucked into the Middle East maelstrom?
- Could America's addiction to oil be its undoing?
- Will the United States become part of a North American union with Canada and Mexico?

- Will America be destroyed by a nuclear attack?
- Could America collapse in on itself as a result of moral corruption?
- Is there any hope for America? for the future?

We'll explore these questions and many others in the pages that follow. You may not agree with every conclusion I reach. And that's okay. I welcome your thoughtful interaction as we embark on this exciting and increasingly relevant adventure to discover what the Bible does and doesn't say about America's last days.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. After spiritual preparation, what's the most important thing Americans can do to prepare for the future?

While there are many legitimate answers to this question, I would suggest simplifying your life. One of the chief causes of our nation's troubles is excess. When crises come, most people are woefully ill prepared because they are stretched too far financially. Most Americans need to commit to saving more and spending less. To living within their means. To traveling lighter through life. This kind of life brings less stress, greater freedom and flexibility, and the opportunity to be in a better position to weather personal storms as well as have some disposable funds to help others in need. Simplifying our lives will mean different things to different people, the people I know who live simple, uncluttered lives are always in the best position to face the future, whatever it brings.

2. How can we become better at combining biblical knowledge with cultural awareness?

In 1 Chronicles 12:32 we read about a rare, valuable breed of men in the days of King David: “the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do.” These men discerned the times and cast their lot with David instead of Saul, which proved to be a very wise decision. We should strive to be modern “sons of Issachar” who understand our times and are able to parlay that knowledge into practical action for our lives, our families, our communities, and our nation. I don't think this means that we have to be twenty-four-hour news junkies who eagerly gobble up every cable news story or constantly comb the Internet for breaking news. It simply

means that we cannot be social or civic ostriches with heads buried in the Bible, unaware of the issues and challenges of our day.

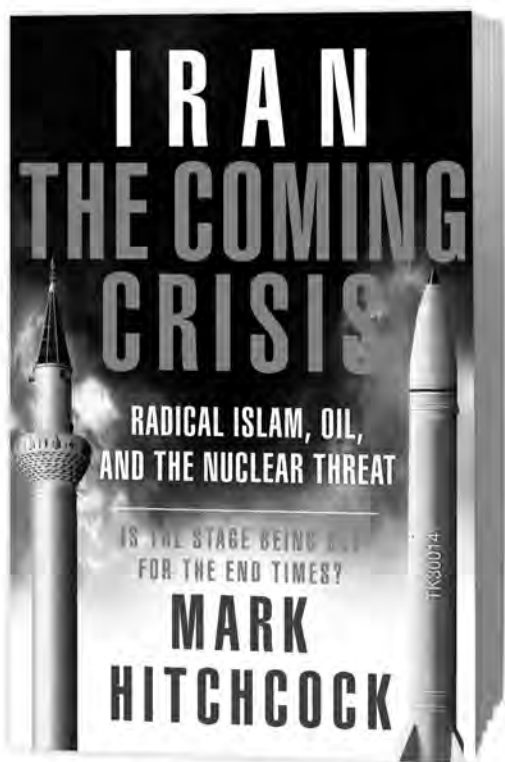
But how can we become modern-day Issacharites? How can we bring God's wisdom to bear in our increasingly polarized political environment? Let me suggest a couple of things. First, understanding of the times means we should be familiarizing ourselves with both sides of the issues and the real challenges of our day. To do this I would suggest thoughtfully reading a daily newspaper, listening to one good news program regularly that involves analysis and presents views opposite your own, and becoming intentional about reading good books that heighten and inform your cultural awareness. Second, it also means that we must not be afraid to actively, creatively, discerningly engage and embrace our culture as led by the Holy Spirit.

3. How do you suggest people overcome any fears they have of the future?

The first decade of the twenty-first century is over, and many people are grateful. Experts have given the decade a resounding thumbs-down. It's been dubbed by many as the decade of fear or even the lost decade. It started with the horror of 9/11 and the ongoing war on terror, was punctuated by two serious recessions, raised the specter of climate crisis, and ended with unemployment hovering around 10 percent. How can we be optimistic about the future?

While no one on earth knows what the future holds, we can know who holds the future. That's our solace in uncertain, dangerous times. My favorite word in all of Bible prophecy is a name for God. I call it the prophetic name for God. God is called "the Almighty" nine times in the book of Revelation. The English word comes from the Greek *pantokrator*, which is made up of *pantos* (all) and *kratein* (to hold in one's hand). God has everything in His hands. Next time you are tempted by fear or a nagging pessimism about the future, let this thought flood your soul: God holds everything. No matter how things appear, He really does. That includes our nation, our families, and our lives.

ARE WE HEADED FOR A NUCLEAR JIHAD?



In a prophecy written over 2,500 years ago, Ezekiel 38–39 foretells Iran’s future. Iran, Russia, and other Islamic nations will invade Israel in the end times. Today, the connection between Iran and Russia grows stronger. How close is this invasion?

ANSWERS TO YOUR END TIMES QUESTIONS

Prophecy expert Mark Hitchcock invites you to take an in-depth look at the end times and provides a positive word of hope for your family in a time when world events are in upheaval.

