

Are we on the threshold of a brave new world with peace and plenty for all? Or are we tottering on the brink of unprecedented disaster? — Or both?

*The Future Foretold* meets these questions head-on. Ancient prophecies coupled with up-to-date documentation from respected news sources present a compelling case that we are living in the era the biblical seers called the Last Days.

Awareness of the predictions in this booklet will give you a new perspective on the radical transformation the world is currently undergoing, as well as prepare you for the cataclysmic changes to come.



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THE FUTURE FORETOLD

SCOTT MACGREGOR

# THE FUTURE FORETOLD



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THE  
FUTURE  
FORETOLD

**Ancient Prophecies  
Now Being Fulfilled**

**2008 Edition**

**First edition by Michael Roy  
Updated and revised by Scott MacGregor**

# Acknowledgments

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# The Future Foretold

AS EVENTS UNFOLD IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM AD, **A** is our planet on the threshold of a brave New World Order, with peace and plenty for all, or are we tottering on the brink of unparalleled chaos and disaster?—Or *both*?

This book provides answers that will prepare you for what's ahead.

Biblical prophets foretold many things that concern today's world. Within the pages of this book we will examine specific predictions and prophecies—two to three thousand years old—which accurately depict conditions and events that have taken place, or are soon to take place—quite possibly during our lifetime.

Among the prophecies we will be looking at are ancient predictions describing our modern rapid transportation systems, today's unprecedented increase in world travel, as well as the contemporary explosion in knowledge of all kinds. Other technological advances, such as electronic banking, as well as a soon-to-be-implemented global financial system, were likewise predicted with uncanny accuracy.

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The effects of climate change and outbreaks of lethal epidemics were also foretold.

Awareness of the predictions covered in this book will give you a new perspective on the radical transformation the world is currently undergoing, as well as prepare you for the cataclysmic changes to come.

### THE BIG QUESTION

Throughout the ages a number of great religious teachers and seers have received special insight into the future. A discourse that is regarded by many as the most profound and detailed of its kind was given 2,000 years ago on a hillside just outside the ancient city of Jerusalem. There, a small band of truth-seekers gathered around their teacher, a carpenter-turned-preacher, known as Jesus of Nazareth. The question they asked Him prompted a response that spanned the centuries and then zeroed in on the days in which we are now living:

**“As He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’” (Matthew 24:3).**

What His followers were asking Him about is often referred to as the “Second Coming,”

The parenthetical references following Bible quotations indicate the book, chapter, and verse where the passage may be found.

the dramatic return of Christ prior to His takeover of the world and the establishing of the kingdom of God on Earth. The term “the end of the age” is used here not to signify the end of the planet, but the end of the unjust and inhumane reign of man.

Jesus answered their question by not just pointing out one sign that would indicate when “the end” would be near, but He gave *many* specific indicators to be on the lookout for. Outstanding predictions by a number of other biblical writers help fill in the picture. It is these prophesied “signs” that we will now focus on.

## THE EVEN BIGGER ANSWERS

**“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. ... For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”—Jesus (Matthew 24:6–8)**

“Sorrows” is the English translation of the Greek word *wdi/nwn* [transliterated as *odin*] that appears in the original text of Matthew’s Gospel. This word more commonly means birth pangs, the painful muscle contractions that a pregnant woman experiences during labor and subsequent childbirth.

The world has experienced these birth pangs of wars, famines, plagues, and

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earthquakes for millennia. The apostle Paul noted: “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Romans 8:22). But labor only goes on for a limited amount of time.

The birth of the “baby,” which in this case is Jesus’ return and the end of this age, is not going to wait forever. And you may be surprised to learn just how these birth pangs have progressed in recent years. Take the first part of this passage, for example. ...

# A World at War

*“You will bear of wars and rumors of wars. ... For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.”*

WAR HAS BEEN A SCOURGE OF THE WORLD and mankind since time immemorial, but no period in history has witnessed a greater number of wars or greater destruction brought about by them than has the last hundred years

Prior to 1914, war had never been universal, but in both World War I and II, *global* war was waged. In the latter, all but 12 small nations of the world were militarily or technically involved, and 93 million people served in the armed forces of both sides. Of these, 25 million died. Civilian casualties were unprecedented: In the Soviet Union alone, over 20 million civilians died as a result of the war. The *Washington Post* noted:

[The] 20th-century wars have been “total wars” against combatants and civilians alike. ... The barbarian wars

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of centuries past were alley fights in comparison.<sup>1</sup>

Other newspapers and commentators have also described the carnage:

Since the end of World War II, there have been at least 130 wars, killing more than 23 million people directly and another 20 million through famine and other war-related disruptions. Whereas the number of major wars—killing at least 1,000 persons—stood at around a dozen in any given year during the fifties, and rose no higher than 20 a year during the sixties and seventies, it surged at the beginning of the eighties to more than 30.<sup>2</sup> In the 1990s there were 56 wars in 44 countries. Most were civil upheavals for control of the government or territory.<sup>3</sup>

As of 2007 there were 34 armed conflicts being waged around the world.<sup>4</sup> Three times as many people—110 million—fell victim to war in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as in all the wars from the first century A.D. to 1899. And 70 percent of all war casualties since World War II have been civilians, rising to more than 90 percent in the 1990s.<sup>5</sup>

The innocent have paid the greatest price in wars, the data show. Between

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1990 and 2000 alone, 2 million children were killed. Since 1945, wars have produced 35 million refugees.<sup>6</sup>

Since the War on Terror was declared after 9/11, till July 2007 an estimated 832,962 people were killed, and 1,590,895 seriously injured in Afghanistan and Iraq, regarded as the two principal theaters of that war. That is 16 times as many people as have been killed in all terrorist attacks in the world since 1968.<sup>7</sup> Further studies put the death toll in Iraq alone at 1.2 million.<sup>8</sup>

The world hoped that the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 would not only signify the end of the Cold War between the superpowers, but usher in a new era of global peace. Unfortunately, this has not been the case.

### **Ethnic Cleansing and Tribal Terror**

The Greek word for “nation” originally used in this prophecy, “nation shall rise against nation,” is *ethnos*, which is more accurately translated “a race” or “a tribe.” In other words, Jesus was saying that ethnic groups would rise against each other. This has been tragically fulfilled in recent times. Pulitzer prize-winning historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (1917–2007) warned, “The 20th century [was] a century of the warfare of ideologies: democracy vs. fascism,

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democracy vs. communism. But the end of the Cold War has released long-buried national, racial, ethnic, and linguistic antagonisms around the world. ... The 21st century promises to be a century of the warfare of ethnicities.”<sup>9</sup>

The Associated Press (AP) reports that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century the murders perpetrated by nations against their own people exceeded the deaths caused by wars with rivals outside their borders. Citing Stalin’s purges, Mao’s Cultural Revolution, Pol Pot’s killing fields, the so-called ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the horrors of Rwanda, etc., the grim verdict is reached:

War aside, the 20<sup>th</sup> century [was] awash in blood. On every continent but North America and Australia, governments have murdered those they governed by the thousands and millions, often by turning neighbor against neighbor. In this most civilized century, by one estimate the killing rage has extinguished *170 million* lives. ... [The 20<sup>th</sup> century] is the century that coined the term “genocide.”<sup>10</sup>

Conflicts within states now make up more than 95% of all conflicts.<sup>11</sup> Prominent among this type of conflict is the perennial Palestinian/Israeli conflict that has now gone on for sixty years, resulting in thousands of deaths, many

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more casualties, and millions of refugees, some displaced now for generations.

Although the outlook may appear bleak, the day is soon coming when God Himself will intervene in this violent world, and war shall be forever abolished. The Bible tells us that when Christ returns to rule the Earth, “He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).

More about this future reign of world peace later, but now, back to the pressing realities of the present.

# “Mommy, I’m Hungry!”

*“And there will be famines. ...”*

**A**RE WE LIVING IN A TIME OF FAMINE?

Extreme poverty remains a daily reality for more than 1 billion people who subsist on less than US\$1 a day. Hunger and malnutrition are almost equally pervasive: More than 800 million people have too little to eat to meet their daily energy needs. More than a quarter of children under age five in developing countries are malnourished.

Malnutrition in children contributes to over half of child deaths. It is caused not only by food deprivation, but also by the debilitating effects of infectious diseases and lack of care. Over 150 million children under age five in the developing world are underweight.

Out of 13 million deaths in large-scale conflicts from 1994 to 2003, over 12 million were in sub-Saharan Africa,

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Western Asia, and Southern Asia. Not surprisingly, these regions are also home to three quarters of the world's 37 million refugees and displaced persons and the areas where the number of hungry people is growing.

Over the same period of time, 669,000 people died as a consequence of natural disasters. Nearly three quarters of these deaths were in Eastern and Southern Asia.<sup>12</sup>

All of this is compounded by a profound climate change that is affecting—or soon will—every corner of the world. Sir John Houghton, a British climate expert and co-chair of the Scientific Assessment Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, warns that we have yet to see the ravages that global warming will wreak: “Forests will die, diseases like malaria will spread, and starving refugees will wander across borders as weather becomes more extreme.<sup>13</sup> The impacts of global warming are such that I have no hesitation in describing it as a ‘weapon of mass destruction.’”<sup>14</sup>

While it took until 1830 to reach a world population of one billion, it only took 100 years more to add a second billion (1930), 30 years for the third billion (1960), 16 years for the fourth billion (1976), and 11 years for

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the fifth billion (1987). World population has more than doubled in the last 50 years and now tops 6.6 billion. The world's population is expected to reach 8.5 billion by the year 2030. As the number of people increases, per capita availability of water and arable land decreases.

More than 2.7 billion people will face severe water shortages by the year 2025 if the world continues consuming water at the same rate [and] another 2.5 billion people will live in areas where it will be difficult to find sufficient fresh water to meet their needs.<sup>15</sup> The control of water resources is predicted to become a major cause of armed conflict in the future.<sup>16</sup>

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Secretariat issued an urgent call for disaster preparedness in light of [the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fourth Assessment] global climate report that confirmed global warming, rising sea levels and increasing acidity in the oceans. The Director of the Secretariat, Silvano Briceño, says that spells an upcoming increase in disasters, including heat waves, floods, droughts, and stronger hurricanes and tropical storms.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Simple Solution**

The terrible irony is that the world *does* produce enough food to feed its expanding population. While some famines are caused by drought or other natural disasters, most

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starvation in the world today could be avoided were it not for humanity's selfishness and inhumanity. War, sanctions, government corruption, and economic oppression are all symptoms of the real problem. While innocent children starve, some rich nations destroy millions of tons of food in order to keep prices artificially high and other states impose artificial barriers such as sanctions, which hurt the poor most of all.

An AP article tells us that the authoritative Bread for the World Institute expressed such sentiments in its fifth annual report:

“World hunger is rooted in a breakdown of humanitarian values,” according to the organization, which lobbies for bigger anti-poverty programs. Its report identified violence, political powerlessness, poverty, racial discrimination, and environmental strains as the main causes of malnutrition.<sup>18</sup>

World agriculture produces 17 percent more calories per person today than it did 30 years ago, despite a 70-percent population increase. This is enough to provide everyone in the world with at least 2,720 calories per person per day.<sup>19</sup> The recommended daily intake of calories for men is approximately 2,500 and for women 2,000 according to

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Britain's Food Standards Agency. The principal problem is that many people in the world do not have sufficient land to grow enough food or income to purchase it.

The inequities present in the world are brought out when we consider that the amount of money that the richest one percent of the world's people make each year equals what the poorest 57 percent make.<sup>20</sup> The richest fifth of the world's people consume four fifths of the world's resources.<sup>21</sup>

The financial costs to end hunger are relatively slight. The United Nations Development Program estimates that the basic health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest people could be met for an additional \$13 billion a year. Animal lovers in the United States and Europe spend more than that on pet food each year.<sup>22</sup>

852 million people across the world are hungry, up from 842 million a year ago. Every day, more than 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes—one child every five seconds.<sup>23</sup>

If we could all learn to simply follow the Golden Rule and do unto others as we wish they would do unto us, even such daunting problems as widespread famine could be eliminated.

## The Great Waster: War

Famines are frequently the result of war, so more war usually means more famine. Former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969) highlighted the wanton waste of war when he declared,

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. ... Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron. ... Is there no other way the world may live?<sup>24</sup>

Here are some contemporary facts that put what Eisenhower said in perspective:

The cost to the U.S. alone for the war in Iraq was over \$480 billion in December 2007. Researchers say each *day* of the U.S. war on Iraq costs \$341 million.<sup>25</sup>

An astronomical 2.1 million dollars are spent worldwide on the military every minute.

An F-35 Lightning II aircraft will cost around \$50 million.

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A Westland WAH-64 Apache attack helicopter cost \$46.2 million

An Abrams M1A2 battle tank costs \$5.6 million

A Tomahawk missile: \$1.3 million

A Sidewinder air-to-air missile: \$200,000

Tank shells range from \$2,000 to \$36,000 each.

According to the World Food Program, 20,000 children die of hunger every day, even though only 19 US cents can feed a child a meal.<sup>26</sup> The money spent financing one minute of the war in Iraq would give three meals to over 415,000 children! There are approximately 400 million chronically hungry children in the world. Every one of them could be fed three meals for what is spent on just 16 hours of fighting. The amount spent on the Iraq war from 2003 through May 2008 could have fed all the world's hungry children for over six years!

Worldwide, there were some 37 million refugees and displaced persons in 2005—largely as a result of wars, political turbulence, civil conflict, and social unrest.

Conflict-induced internal displacement affected some 50 countries across Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and

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the Middle East in 2005. Over 12 million people were displaced in Africa alone.<sup>27</sup>

Many are appalled at the money that small developing countries spend on armaments while vast numbers of people of those countries are destitute, but are more understanding of the developed countries that “can afford it.” But the developing world is spending a paltry amount compared to the major players.

World military expenditure in 2005 is estimated to have reached US\$1,118 billion in current dollars and is projected to [have reached] \$1.2 trillion in 2007. This corresponds to 2.5 percent of world GDP or an average spending of \$173 per capita. World military expenditure in 2005 represents a real terms increase of 3.4 percent since 2004, and of 34 percent over the 10-year period 1996–2005.

The 15 countries with the highest spending now account for 84 percent of the total. The U.S., responsible for about 80 percent of the increase in 2005, is the principal determinant of the current world trend, and its military expenditure is 48 percent of the world total, distantly followed by the UK, France, Japan, and China with 4–5 percent each.<sup>28</sup>

# A Plagued Planet

*“And there will be pestilences...”*

AS WITH WAR AND FAMINE, the severity and frequency with which “pestilences”—epidemics of highly infectious diseases—continue to strike is alarming.

Last century, the medical profession prematurely claimed victory over a wide array of bacterial and viral killers. In 1979, then-U.S. Surgeon General William Stewart declared that it was time to “close the books on infectious diseases.”<sup>29</sup>

As recently as 1983, a medical textbook declared infectious diseases “more easily prevented and more easily cured” than any other major group of disorders.<sup>30</sup>

But instead of fading, the cases of infectious diseases skyrocketed throughout the '90s. Dr. Sherwin Nuland, in his bestselling book, *How We Die*,<sup>31</sup> laments, “Medicine’s purported triumph over infectious disease has become an illusion.”<sup>32</sup> Doctors now warn that the current resurgence of drug-resistant bacteria strains could prove to be more deadly than AIDS.

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The book *The Killers Within* charts the acceleration of resistant infections that began with a few cases in the late 1980s and are now spiraling out of control. The germs, once killed easily with standard antibiotics, can disintegrate skin, clog the lungs and carve golf-ball-size abscesses in flesh.

“The bad bugs are getting stronger and they’re getting stronger faster,” says co-author Mark Plotkin, a Smithsonian Institution ethnobotanist.

The epidemic comes as pharmaceutical companies have all but stopped doing research on antibiotics.<sup>33</sup>

Drug-resistant bugs are out of control. The epicenter of this epidemic lies inside the hospital. Each year, estimates the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 100,000 Americans die of hospital-bred infections, a higher toll than deaths from breast cancer and AIDS combined. Nearly 2 million patients get hospital infections (of a total 35 million stays), and two-thirds of them have infections that resist at least one drug. This crisis costs us \$30 billion a year.<sup>34</sup>

A “virtually untreatable” form of tuberculosis (TB) has emerged, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Extreme drug resistant TB (XDR TB) has

been seen worldwide. XDR TB is defined as strains that are not only resistant to the front-line drugs, but also three or more of the six classes of second-line drugs.

This, according to Dr. Paul Nunn, coordinator of the WHO team at the Stop TB department, makes it virtually untreatable.

Multi-drug resistant TB (MDR TB), which describes strains of TB that are resistant to at least two of the main first-line TB drugs, is already a growing concern. Globally, the WHO estimates there are about 425,000 cases of MDR TB a year, mostly occurring in the former Soviet Union, China, and India.<sup>35</sup>

## **The Antibiotic Backfire**

Why this sudden reemergence of diseases that were once considered to be waning or almost eliminated? Ironically, the experts say that it's the widespread misuse of drugs designed to eliminate them that is now responsible for the new super-strains.

Critics complain of a "B-52 approach" among some doctors who blitz their patients with a battery of broad-based antibiotics, often when they are unsure exactly what is making them sick. Experts also suspect that the wide use of antibiotics in animal feed is contributing to the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.<sup>36</sup>

## **Viral Killers**

The medical community is now warning that not only are bacterial plagues on the rise, but viral killers like AIDS and Ebola are occurring more frequently than ever. But the threat from influenza might be the most dangerous of all.

The influenza virus has developed the ability to circumvent the human body's main defense against the disease, raising the prospect of a deadly new global outbreak, scientists have discovered.

Research into an outbreak of the illness [in 1997], which killed one-third of its victims, has established that the strain responsible was able to bypass completely its victims' first and most crucial immune response to the infection.

Dr. Klaus Stohr, the leader of the World Health Organization's global influenza program, called the 1997 outbreak "the last warning from nature" that the world must prepare for a flu pandemic.

The biggest threat comes from strains created when one form of the virus jumps from an animal species to a human already infected with a more common type of flu. Inside the human host, the two viruses combine to create a brand-

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new strain to which no one on the planet has any prior immunity. That virus can then race through the population like a fire through dry tinder. This, scientists now think, is what happened during the “Spanish flu” pandemic of 1918 and 1919—the most deadly flu of all time.

Throughout the world, the Spanish flu killed an estimated 50 million people worldwide—more lives than were claimed by the Black Death in the 1300s.

Another pandemic is inevitable. “Pandemics come in cycles and we’re overdue for one,” says Dr. Donald Perlman, an immunologist at the University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey. Scientists particularly worry about avian flu viruses common in Asia.<sup>37</sup>

“New diseases are emerging at the historically unprecedented rate of one per year,” the WHO’s director-general, Dr. Margaret Chan, said in an introduction to the 2007 World Health Report.

“It would be extremely naïve and complacent to assume that there will not be another disease like AIDS, another Ebola, or another SARS, sooner or later,” the report said.

In 1951, when WHO issued its first set of health regulations to prevent the international spread of diseases, the

situation was stable, the report said. People traveled internationally by ship, slowing the spread of diseases around the world. New diseases were rare.

But today, high volumes of people can quickly travel worldwide, meaning an outbreak or epidemic in any part of the planet is only a few hours away from becoming an imminent threat somewhere else, the report said. Over the last five years, WHO confirmed more than 1,100 disease outbreaks worldwide, such as cholera, polio and bird flu.<sup>38</sup>

## **The AIDS Explosion**

AIDS statistics are staggering. UNAIDS stated that an estimated 2.5 million new HIV infections occurred in 2007. In that year, 2.1 million people died of AIDS. As of the end of 2007, over 33.2 million people are living with HIV/AIDS.<sup>39</sup>

More than 25 million people have died of AIDS since 1981. Africa has 12 million AIDS orphans. Young people (15–24 years old) account for half of all new HIV infections worldwide—around 6,000 become infected with HIV every day.<sup>40</sup>

Aside from the above-mentioned plagues, there is, of course, cancer, which is considered

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noninfectious. Scientists estimate that about 80 percent of cancers are caused by environmental factors, such as tobacco smoke (actively or passively inhaled) and the ingestion of harmful chemicals in our modern food and water supply. Over 200 different kinds of cancer now kill over *6 million* people every year.

Jesus said that plagues and diseases would precede His return. Nevertheless, the Bible also tells us that God can protect and even heal those who trust in Him: “No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling” (Psalm 91:10). “But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2).

## The Big Shake-up

*“And there will be earthquakes, in various places. ...”*

A 1995 top-level meeting of geologists and seismologists warned that the rise of big cities along seismic fault lines will cause unprecedented catastrophes in the near future:

“It’s virtually certain there will be catastrophes in the coming decades, the likes of which we have never seen,” Roger Bilham told an International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics meeting. “Fatality counts exceeding one million are not an unreasonable projection given that 50 percent of an urban population can be lost in a single earthquake.” While major earthquakes “have generally spared the world’s urban centers in recent decades, this trend will not persist indefinitely,” Bilham said.<sup>41</sup>

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The U.S. Geological Survey National Earthquake Information Center reports that there are over 3.3 million earthquakes occurring annually throughout the world. Around 140 of them are magnitude 6.0 or greater on the Richter scale. There is no reliable predictor of when quakes will occur, and they occur over widely scattered areas of the world.

The 2004 Asian Tsunami was caused by a massive magnitude 9.0 earthquake, when 30 kilometers below the seafloor a 1200-km stretch of the Indian tectonic plate was thrust up to 20 meters under the Burma plate, raising the seafloor by several meters. The energy released was equivalent to the explosion of 475,000 kilotons of TNT, or 23,000 Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs. Waves up to 10 meters high crashed into the coastline of Sumatra near the epicenter. At least 226,000 were killed and over 500,000 injured, and one million people were left without the means to make a living.<sup>42</sup>

It was followed less than three months later by another great quake measuring 8.7 in the same region. It was the first time in recorded seismic history—more than a century—that two quakes of such size have happened so close together.

The prophet Isaiah envisioned monster quakes in the last days, saying, “The foundations of the earth are shaken. The earth

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is ... shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut ... in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall” (Isaiah 24:18–20; 30:25).

The Bible’s book of Revelation mentions five times that massive quakes would occur in the last days:

Such passages provide the eschatological backdrop for the book of Revelation, where earthquakes are symbols of God’s final judgment upon the Earth. They appear as climactic judgments throughout the book, producing terror, awe, and destruction among the Earth’s inhabitants. These are at the opening of the sixth and seventh seals (Revelation 6:12; 8:5), just before and after the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:13,19), and during the seventh bowl (Revelation 16:18). This last earthquake is identified as the greatest ever on Earth, splitting Jerusalem into three parts and destroying the cities of the nations.<sup>43</sup>

## Our Violent World

**A**NOTHER CONDITION that Jesus indicated would be prevalent immediately prior to His return would be pervasive violence: “As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:37).

How were things in “the days of Noah?” The book of Genesis tells us “the earth was corrupt before God, and was *filled* with violence” (Genesis 6:11). We are all painfully aware that today’s headlines are full of tragic stories of violence.

Political violence is the term used to describe the violence perpetrated by governments on their own or conquered people, or violence committed by political and ideological groups. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century it is estimated that around 110 million people died as a result of wars. However, this pales in comparison to the 170 million estimated to have been killed in political violence during the same period [in fact, just from 1900–1987].<sup>44</sup> 170 million deaths translates

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to around 4,600 people (close to twice the amount killed at the World Trade Center towers during the 9/11 attack.<sup>45</sup>) being killed every day for 100 years.

Aside from political violence, violence in all its forms surrounds us. One country that has statistics readily available on this is the United States. In the U.S., more people died from gun-related killings in the 19 years spanning 1979–1997 (651,697) than U.S. servicemen and women that died in combat in war from the Revolutionary War (1775–1783) through to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (650,858).<sup>46</sup>

Violence is a universal scourge that tears at the fabric of communities and threatens the life, health and happiness of us all. Each year, more than 1.6 million people worldwide lose their lives to violence. For everyone who dies as a result of violence, many more are injured and suffer from a range of physical, sexual, reproductive and mental health problems. Violence is among the leading causes of death for people aged 15–44 years worldwide, accounting for about 14% of deaths among males and 7% of deaths among females.<sup>47</sup>

### **That's *Entertainment*?**

While juvenile violent crime is down from the historic highs of the early to mid-1990s, we are all still aware of the violent environment that many of the youth of the world live in. School shootings at places like Jokela, Finland; Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia; Dawson College, Montreal, Canada; Columbine High in Littleton, Colorado; West Paducah, Kentucky; Jonesboro, Arkansas; Springfield, Oregon; and Erfurt, Germany, are still vivid memories to many.

Why this unprecedented violence among today's youth? Behavioral scientists have concluded that one of the main culprits is so-called entertainment, particularly the images brought into everyone's home, courtesy of television, movies, and the computer gaming industry. In times past, you had to be on the scene where the violence was perpetrated in order to personally witness it. Not now! By the time the average US schoolchild leaves elementary school, he or she will have witnessed more than 8000 murders and 100,000 other acts of violence on television. If the child also has access to violent computer games or films, or cable TV, these figures will be far, far higher.<sup>48</sup>

The Virginia Tech, Montreal, Erfurt, and Columbine killers were avid fans of violent computer games. "Software for a massacre,"

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ran the headline in the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on the Erfurt massacre. “The killer was trained by a computer game.” Though media violence is not the only, or even necessarily prime, motivator in the school killings, nevertheless their high level of exposure to violence desensitizes children and makes them comfortable with such behavior.

The link between violence on film and violence in our streets and homes is strong. *United Press International* reports on a survey conducted by the 40,000-member Professional Association of Teachers in Britain, which concluded that:

“The impact of violent material is far more widespread than was previously thought,” said Jackie Miller, the association’s deputy secretary general. The survey found that 77 percent of secondary school teachers thought children were being “desensitized to violence,” and choosing to glorify and mimic violent activity in the playground.<sup>49</sup>

Dr. Leonard D. Efron, Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, studied the habits of more than 400 viewers for 22 years. He observes: “There can

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no longer be any doubt that heavy exposure to televised violence is one of the causes of aggressive behavior, crime, and violence in society.” Arnold Kahn of the American Psychological Association adds, “The debate over the effects of violence on television is like the debate over cigarette smoking and cancer.”<sup>50</sup>

Gayle Hanson, in the article “The Violent World of Videogames,” had the following to say:

Among those whose voices have risen to damn the computer-game industry for recklessness is Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, a former professor of psychology at the U.S. Military Academy, who taught a course that analyzed the psychology of killing. He says of some of the games, “They are murder simulators which over time teach a person how to look another person in the eyes and snuff their life out.”

To understand the virus of violence that seems epidemic to many, Grossman points to statistics showing an increase in assault in many countries. According to statistics provided by INTERPOL, from 1977 to 1993, the assault rate in Australia and New Zealand increased

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by almost 400 percent. The assault rate tripled in Sweden and doubled in Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Hungary, Holland, and Scotland. In the United States the rate of aggravated assault rose from about 60 per 100,000 in 1957 to more than 440 per 100,000 by the middle of [the '90s, a 700% increase].

“Though we should never downplay child abuse, poverty or racism,” Grossman says, “there is only one new variable present in each of these countries, bearing the exact same fruit: media violence presented as entertainment for children.”<sup>51</sup>

In his book, *High Tech / High Touch: Technology and Our Search for Meaning*, John Naisbitt, the acclaimed social forecaster and author of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Megatrends 2000*, plaintively states the following:

Many of the most popular games are relentlessly violent, and the same video games that are entertaining our children are being used to train our military. Living in the Technologically Intoxicated Zone, we deny that the

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culture of violence delivered through our television, film, Internet, and video game screens is real. Yet we are perplexed by the violence committed by our young, as epitomized by the Littleton school massacre in Colorado. If we begin to understand that what is on our screens is real, our tolerance for media violence will change forever. And we will no longer send our children into an electronic war zone daily and expect them to remain unaffected and unscarred.<sup>52</sup>

## The “Me” Generation

*“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall [grow] cold”  
(Matthew 24:12, KJV).*

THIS IS HOW JESUS DESCRIBED the callous condition of people’s hearts in the days before His return. In a related passage, the apostle Paul writes, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1–4).

Selfishness and cold-heartedness seem to be prevalent almost everywhere we look. The British *Press Authority* reflects what’s occurring in most countries:

Britain is in moral decline as people become more selfish and less public-spirited, according to a [recent] survey.

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The country is less law-abiding than it was 10 years ago, according to 77 percent of people questioned in a Gallup social survey, while 65 percent said the sense of morality was weaker.

People were also “less likely to get involved” than they were 10 years ago, according to 70 percent, while 72 percent thought the country was becoming more selfish.<sup>53</sup>

This view was echoed in the “Final Report of the National Commission of Civic Renewal” in the United States, co-chaired by the former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett and former Senator Sam Nunn. The commission report states:

During the past generation, our families have come under intense pressure, and many have crumbled. Neighborhood and community ties have frayed. Many of our streets and public spaces have become unsafe. Our public schools are mediocre for most students, and catastrophic failures for many. Our character-forming institutions are enfeebled. Much of our popular culture is vulgar, violent, and mindless. Much of our public square is coarse and uncivil. ... Public trust in our leaders and institutions has plunged.<sup>54</sup>

## “Missing” Children

A United Nations study concludes that “the size of the family is shrinking all over the world because women in most countries want fewer children.”<sup>55</sup> One reason for reduced family size is the radical increase in the number of abortions performed in the last several decades. Despite the fact that advances in fetal science have made a compelling case that human life begins at conception,<sup>56</sup> worldwide an estimated *46 million* unborn children’s lives are snuffed out every year. The following passage from the Bible prophet Jeremiah could aptly be applied to our times: “On your skirts is found the blood of the lives of the poor innocents. I [God] have not found it by secret search, but plainly on all these things” (Jeremiah 2:34).

A mother’s love for her infant has always been considered as pure and natural as can be. *Reuters* reports that “women around the world are having fewer children and are ending [about] a quarter of all pregnancies in abortion.”<sup>57</sup>

Forty-six million women around the world have abortions each year. Twenty-two percent of all pregnancies are ended by abortion. Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland have [annual] abortion rates below 10 per 1,000 women of reproductive age; in all other countries

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of Western Europe and in the United States and Canada, rates are 10–23 per 1,000. Romania, Cuba and Vietnam have the highest reported abortion rates in the world (78–83 abortions per 1,000 women). Worldwide, the lifetime average is about 1 abortion per woman.<sup>58</sup>

Researchers have documented that from 1920 to 2006 there were 840 million reported abortions performed. Taking into account estimates of unreported abortions, the total is projected to be 929 million abortions.<sup>59</sup> It is estimated that there are 3.8 million abortions performed each month worldwide.

This is an indictment of modern society, the conditions and values of which push women into making such a decision. Previous generations would be appalled by such statistics, but not ours. Surely the predicted days have arrived and hearts are growing cold and natural affection is fading away.

## The Good News Goes Global

***“And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).***

UNLIKE WARS, FAMINE, PLAGUES, AND EARTHQUAKES, which Jesus called “the beginning of sorrows,” He said that this particular sign—the Gospel being preached in all the world—was a specific sign that would indicate when the actual *end* of the age would be upon the world.

According to *The Almanac of the Christian World*, Christians and Christian churches now exist in every country of the world.<sup>60</sup> Missiologists estimate that between 75 and 85 percent of the world’s population have heard the Gospel at least once.<sup>61</sup> Over 50 million Bibles are distributed every year, as well as nearly 80 million New Testaments. Four billion Gospel tracts are also printed each year.

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According to the United Bible Societies, the entire Bible or parts thereof are now available to about 98 percent of the world's population, having been translated partially or entirely into 2,303 different languages.

Other Christian books are also proliferating. Books primarily about Jesus in today's libraries number 175,000 different titles in 500 languages, increasing by four newly published every day.<sup>62</sup> The Gospel is also preached in 38,000 Christian magazines and on 4,050 radio and television stations.<sup>63</sup> Ninety-nine percent of the world's population have the Gospel available to them via Christian radio stations.<sup>64</sup>

Meanwhile an innumerable number of Christian websites, cyber churches, Gospel webcasts and podcasts, and other Christian ministries evangelize, inform, and pastor via the Internet.

The story of Christ's sacrifice reached millions worldwide with Mel Gibson's retelling of *The Passion of Christ* (2004). But its viewing audience is dwarfed by the *Jesus* film: Shot on location in the Holy Land in 1979, it is a straight-faced retelling of Luke's gospel. Starring a white British Jesus, and with mostly Yemenite Jews in the cast, it is an unlikely candidate for the title of most watched—and most translated—film.<sup>65</sup> Yet it is now translated into over 1000 languages with over 200 more translations in progress. It has had an estimated

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combined viewing and listening audience of over 6 billion.<sup>66</sup>

Never in the course of history has the Gospel been preached in all the world to all nations as it is right now. If not directly by missionaries, it is certainly being preached by the modern mediums of radio, television, telecommunications, and the Internet. This is a conclusive prophecy by Jesus that shows that you and I are now living in the time of the end!

## Globetrotters and Jetsetters

*“Many shall run to and fro...”*  
(Daniel 12:4).

THE MODERN MEANS of communication and transportation that have made it possible for the Gospel to now be preached in all nations bring to mind another specific prediction regarding Endtime conditions. In 534 BC, the prophet Daniel received an outstanding revelation. Afterwards, God told him not to worry that he couldn't understand it all, that even though the prophecy was given *to* him, it wasn't *for* him. Amongst many other predictions, Daniel was told:

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

Many running to and fro literally means “speeding about, here and there,” or as *The Living Bible* renders this verse, “travel shall be vastly increased.”

When you consider that people's means of transportation—horse and buggy, wagons, camels, boats, etc.—did not change substantially for thousands of years, you can appreciate the significance of this prophecy.

## **Speed Freaks**

In 1789 it took George Washington eight days to travel the 200 miles from his home to his inauguration in New York City. The fact that it took eight days is not significant. What is noteworthy is that Julius Caesar could have made the same trip just as rapidly in the year 50 BC! No real progress had been made in transportation over the 18 centuries that passed between their lifetimes. But look how mankind has advanced in the past hundred years!

Today we not only drive at enormous speeds and cover great distances in our automobiles, but a new generation of supersonic private jets will fly at nearly 2,000 kilometers per hour,<sup>67</sup> and the space shuttle orbits Earth in 90 minutes.

Two thousand six hundred years ago, another prophet described the following “in the days of the Lord's preparation” before He returns: “The chariots come with flaming torches in the day of His preparation. ... The chariots rage in the streets, they jostle one another in the broad roads; they seem like torches, they run like lightning” (Nahum 2:3–4).

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No horse-drawn chariot ever ran like lightning. Could this be a vision of our modern highways at night filled with vehicles with their headlights on? It would certainly fit the description. And if it is, our modern vehicle-filled highways are another indication that the Lord is soon to return.

And they certainly jostle one another in the broad roads. Since the invention of the motor vehicle over a century ago, it is estimated that about 30 million people have been killed in road crashes.

Road traffic accidents—the leading cause of death by injury and the tenth-leading cause of all deaths globally—now make up a surprisingly significant portion of the worldwide burden of ill-health. An estimated 1.2 million people are killed in road crashes each year, and as many as 50 million are injured.<sup>68</sup>

### **Travelmania**

The number of people traveling today is unprecedented in history. In 1990, economic forecaster John Naisbitt underscored how the largest industry in the world is now the one which enables people to “run to and fro”:

Travel and tourism is the biggest  
and the most energetic industry in the

‡ See also verses 5 and 24 of Matthew 24.

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world. It will be one of the three super-industries driving the (global) economy of [this] century, along with Information Technology and Telecommunications.<sup>69</sup>

There was concern that the airline industry might never recover from the downturn it experienced after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. However, the travel industry needn't have worried.

World tourism broke all records in 2006 despite fears over terrorism, bird flu and rising oil prices, the United Nations tourism watchdog reported [January 29, 2007]. A total of 842 million international tourist arrivals were recorded [in 2006], an increase of 4.5 percent, the Madrid-based World Tourism Organization said, citing preliminary data. That followed a 5.5 percent jump in 2005.<sup>70</sup>

According to the Geneva-based Airports Council International, airports handled *4.4 billion* passengers on all services in the twelve-month period ending January 2007—equivalent to about two-thirds of the world's population.<sup>71</sup>

World travel and tourism is expected to generate in excess of US\$7 trillion in

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2007, rising to over US\$13 trillion over the coming decade. It accounts for 10.4 percent of global GDP and over 230 million jobs [and is] set to grow at more than 4.3 percent per annum over the next ten years.<sup>72</sup>

While most travel is in pursuit of leisure, adventure, or business, another reason that many people today travel to distant lands, particularly young people, is because they are dissatisfied with their own country, culture, or religion, and are searching for solutions or answers elsewhere. This brings to mind another prophecy about the last days, given by the Old Testament prophet Amos: “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord” (Amos 8:11–12).

Never in all of world history have people traveled the distances, the speeds, or with the frequency that hundreds of millions are traveling today. Truly many are running to and fro, just like God said they would in the “time of the end.”

# Information Overload

*“Knowledge shall increase” (Daniel 12:4).*

IT IS WITH GOOD CAUSE that the term “information overload” was coined in recent years. If the amount of information that is available is an indication of the knowledge available, knowledge has increased within our generation almost beyond imagination! Here are just a few mind-boggling facts on this:

► The total amount of the world’s newly generated digital information is expected to have exploded by 60%—to 8 exabytes [in 2005] from 5 exabytes in 2003, according to figures and extrapolations developed by the University of California at Berkeley. That means that [in one year] the world will generate 57,000 times the total of all information in the Library of Congress.

An exabyte is 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 bytes, or 1 billion billion. All human spoken words in history are calculated to be 5 exabytes. Information in magnetic media

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(such as business digital information) account for more than 90% of this staggering total. U.C. Berkeley estimates that global information increases about 30% per year.<sup>73</sup>

- ▶ Online information doubles every 6 months

- ▶ Corporate information doubles every 18 months

- ▶ Scientific information doubles every 5 years

- ▶ Biological information doubles every 5 years

- ▶ Useful genetic information doubles every 18–24 months

- ▶ The sum total of human knowledge doubles every 2–3 years (and is soon expected to double every year)

- ▶ Printed knowledge doubles every 8 years

- ▶ Technical knowledge doubles every 3 years

- ▶ Medical knowledge doubles every 7 years<sup>74</sup>

- ▶ Each year around a million books are printed (that's titles, not copies), 25,276 newspapers are published (that is separate newspaper titles), 40,000 scholarly journals, 80,000 mass-market periodicals, 40,000 newsletters.<sup>75</sup>

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► Estimates based on the Netcraft Web server survey for January 2008 show there are over 155.5 million distinct websites, an increase of over 33 million from six months before.<sup>76</sup>

As far back as 1995, Professor Peter Cochrane of the British Telecom Laboratories' Advanced Application Division said, "There are now wristwatches that wield more computing ability than some 1970s mainframes. Ordinary cars today have more 'intelligence' than the original lunar lander [Apollo Lunar Module]."<sup>77</sup> In the decade since this statement, computer sciences and related disciplines have advanced exponentially.

Seventy percent of all information in our global society has been created since the start of the Internet and is currently doubling every three years. This means we will have 16 times more information by 2015 than we had in 2003.<sup>78</sup>

Although we have made tremendous strides scientifically and technologically, are we more fulfilled or happier than our predecessors? Our knowledge has radically increased, but much of our scientific genius has been squandered in the development of armaments and weapons of mass destruction. Hi-tech gadgets and luxuries are given priority, while many of our fellow humans are hungry and destitute.

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*TIME* magazine examined this in their 1995 cover story, “The Evolution of Despair”:

VCRs and microwave ovens have their virtues, but in the everyday course of our highly efficient lives, there are times when something seems deeply amiss. ... Whatever the source of stress, we at times get the feeling that modern life isn't what we were designed for.

Rates of depression have been doubling in some industrial countries roughly every 10 years. Fifteen percent of Americans have had a clinical anxiety disorder.<sup>79</sup>

The sentiments expressed then are even more appropriate today and the statistics even more gloomy. In 2002 nearly 25 million Americans were prescribed and took antidepressants.<sup>80</sup> In 2003, 213 million prescriptions for antidepressants were written by U.S. doctors,<sup>81</sup> resulting in \$13 billion in sales. Eli Lilly reports that its breakthrough drug Prozac, the first in a new class of antidepressants, has been consumed by more than 35 million people since it was introduced to the U.S. market in 1988.<sup>82</sup> In the United States, the number of deaths from suicide over the past 20 years exceeded the number of deaths from AIDS.<sup>83</sup>

Depression is now the fourth-leading cause of the global disease burden and the leading cause of disability worldwide. Depression

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seriously reduces the quality of life for individuals and their families and often worsens the outcome of other physical health problems. Depression is the most important risk factor for suicide [which claims around a million lives annually, with another 10–20 million attempting suicide each year], and is among the top three causes of death in young people ages 15 to 35.<sup>84</sup>

What good is a head full of knowledge if our hearts are empty and we lack peace of mind and purpose in life?

The 178-nation “UnHappy Planet Index” published by the New Economics Foundation, lists the south Pacific island of Vanuatu as the happiest nation on the planet. Meanwhile, Western nations with their high level of prosperity and abundance are way down the list. The UK and the U.S. fill 108<sup>th</sup> and 150<sup>th</sup> places respectively.<sup>85</sup>

## The Pagan Revival

*“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [of Jesus’ Second Coming] will not come unless the falling away [from faith and belief in Jesus] comes first” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).*

THE CIVILIZATIONS OF EUROPE and countries of the Western world have been described by many commentators as now being “post-Christian.” The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, gave this bleak assessment of Christianity in the United Kingdom: “Christ is being replaced by music, New Age beliefs, the environmental movement, the occult, and the free-market economy.”<sup>86</sup>

In Jesus’ discourse about the signs that would precede His return, three times He told His disciples that numerous false prophets would arise on the world scene, and that they would attract large followings. “Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many” (Matthew 24:11).<sup>87</sup>

Paganism is flourishing. The BBC reports: “A study in 1997 suggested there were 100,000

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practicing pagans in the UK, an increase of 95,000 since 1990.”<sup>88</sup>

Would-be witches are being offered government grants to learn how to cast spells. ... Now they can take up home study courses in the ancient art of Wicca run by the British School of Yoga, which qualify for the government’s individual learning accounts, where students get a discount towards course fees. The subject list [includes] Spell Casting, Divination, Spirits, Gods and Goddesses, The Book of Shadows, and Moon Magic. Successful students are awarded a Diploma in Wicca/Witchcraft of the New Age Foundation. <sup>89</sup>

“Let the little children come to Me,” said Jesus. He did not add “...but only after they have been encouraged to question their faith and made aware of the arguments for atheism.” That is the proposal from the Institute for Public Policy Research [in the United Kingdom], the New Labour think tank that is attempting to refashion Religious Education lessons along progressive lines.

The IPPR report, entitled “What Is Religious Education For?” wants children to be “actively encouraged to question

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the religious beliefs they bring with them into the classroom,” and taught about fashionable alternatives such as paganism and environmentalism.<sup>90</sup>

“Pagan power” is similarly on the increase in North America.

Helen Berger, a professor of sociology at Westchester University, [and] the editor of “Witchcraft and Magic: Contemporary North America,” published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, estimates there are at least 200,000 practicing pagans in [the USA]. Other academics put the number as high as 700,000.<sup>91</sup>

According to the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, based on data from the *American Religious Identification Survey* (ARIS) conducted in 2001, Wiccans and pagans constitute the seventh largest religious grouping in the U.S.

The ARIS survey of the American adult population indicates a growth in the Wiccan community of 17-fold between 1990 and 2001—the highest of any faith group monitored. This would indicate a doubling in numbers of adherents about

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every 2.5 years. If the latter growth rate is accurate and if it continues, then Wicca would be the third largest religious group in the U.S. by about 2012, behind Christianity and Judaism.<sup>92</sup>

The Santeria, Candomblé, Macumba, and Vodou religions that are popular in areas of Latin America and Africa can also be included in this pagan revival.

Although the Bible and prayer were officially banned and removed from U.S. public schools in 1962, many of these same schools now offer their pupils accredited courses in witchcraft and the occult.

The Bible tells us that if people willfully reject God's truth, they will be given "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians 2:10–11). When we refuse the truth, there is nothing left to believe but a lie. This is why much of the world today is wide open for deceivers and false prophets. Of course, the Devil doesn't always show himself to be the evil and destructive spiritual force that he is. Quite the contrary. He and his agents frequently portray themselves as messengers of light and goodness. The apostle Paul explains, "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of

righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:14–15). He is the arch-deceiver.

Unfortunately, one reason a lot of people get caught up in the dark side of the spirit world is because they’ve been disillusioned by the apparent absence of spiritual reality in traditional religions. A South African expert on Satanism attributes youth involvement in the occult to spiritually dead churches. *Reuters* reports,

“Satanism is increasing, especially the serious cases; murder, assaults,” Colonel Kobus Jonker, head of the police’s Occult Investigations Unit in Pretoria, said in an interview.

Jonker blamed what he calls the spiritual bankruptcy of establishment churches in South Africa for the tendency of teenagers to dabble in the occult. “You can actually feel the deadness in many of our churches. There’s nothing going on. I don’t want to sit in a church like that.”<sup>93</sup>

Two fields in which paganism and Satanism have made tremendous inroads are the popular music business and the computer gaming industry.<sup>94</sup> Just take a look at the number of album covers and rock videos that come complete with all the symbols, liturgies, and rituals of witchcraft and the occult. Many

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computer games involve role playing with open worship of Satan and the netherworld. The sights and sounds of Hell have seduced and driven countless people into lifestyles of drugs, perversion, violence, and sometimes suicide. The most shameless acts of blasphemy and desecration are now socially acceptable in the name of audiovisual and multimedia entertainment and “freedom of expression.”

# The Beast That Is to Come

*“The Antichrist is coming” (1 John 2:18).*

**T**HE MOST OUTSTANDING AND OMINOUS SIGN of the end of the world as we know it, and which the Bible devotes some key chapters to, will be the rise of a world government headed by a Devil-possessed tyrant known as the Antichrist or “the Beast” who is given authority “over every tribe, tongue, and nation” (Revelation 13:7). Is the world heading toward a global government as this verse seems to imply?

The European Union now encompasses 27 nations, with more knocking on the door to be admitted. There is a European Parliament; the European Commission; a common currency, the euro, that a number of European nations have already adopted; and if the EU reform treaty is ratified, there will be a “President of Europe.”

The African Union, which includes 53 African nations, was formed in 2001 and aims eventually to have a single currency, an integrated defense force, as well as other institutions of state, including a Cabinet for the AU Head of State.

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In 2004, the nations of South America signed the Cuzco Declaration announcing the foundation of the South American Community, modeled after the European Union, including a common currency, parliament, and passport. The Asian Cooperation Dialogue—which includes 30 Asian countries, including the megastates of Russia, China, and India—declares that its aim is to ultimately transform the Asian continent into an Asian Community.

The United Nations is a global organization with 192 member states and is the hub for many organizations that affect and in some cases regulate our lives, such as the World Health Organization, the International Atomic Energy Commission, the International Labor Organization, UNESCO, the International Court of Justice (the World Court), the International Criminal Court, and the World Bank.

Globalization of the economy is a reality. Numerous trade bodies and treaties are already in place, such as the World Trade Organization, ASEAN, NAFTA, and Mercosur. The idea of global governance where international agreements and protocols will govern international behavior is being championed by high-profile political commentators. When you start looking into it, there are many international and supranational bodies, treaties, and protocols that have at their core the idea of promoting regional, and eventually, global cooperation and integration.

## **The Jerusalem Peace Accord**

It appears that the Antichrist will rise to power on a political platform of peace, security, and economic stability. Like Satan himself, who can appear as an angel of light, this man will deceive most of the world into thinking that he is a great man of peace, a hero.

The prophet Daniel wrote that “he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue” (Daniel 11:21). He confirms with many an international protocol that Daniel called the “Holy Covenant” (Daniel 9:27; 11:22–32).

Whether this world government the Antichrist heads is already in power or rises to power at the time this document is signed, we don't yet know. What the scriptures do state, though, is that this covenant will have a planned duration of seven years and will be pivotal to his claim to world leadership. This pact will resolve the Middle East crisis (at least temporarily), a seemingly impossible task that has repeatedly eluded the best efforts by world leaders since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. It seems the compromise between the Israelis and the Palestinians will include the central issue of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, which is sacred to Jews (their Temple stood there before being destroyed by the Romans in AD 70) and to Muslims (the Dome of the Rock, part of Al-Haram al-Qudsi al-Sharif complex,

the third most revered holy place in Islam, stands there today). Scripture indicates that the Antichrist's covenant will enable the Jews to rebuild their national temple, where they will revive their ancient rituals of animal sacrifice (Daniel 8:23–25; 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–4), suspended when the Temple was destroyed. “Jewish eschatology envisions the construction of the Third Temple in Jerusalem prior to the coming of the Messiah, and thus, adherents of Orthodox and Conservative Judaism anticipate a Third Temple.”<sup>95</sup>

Much of the religious paraphernalia and building material for this temple have already been fabricated and stored, and the priests and temple attendants are already trained.<sup>96</sup>

## **Enter Russia**

The biblical prophet Ezekiel (circa 623–571 BC) calls the Antichrist “Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal” (Ezekiel 38:2). Scholars agree that the ancient land referred to as Magog would appear to be a powerful country or region of peoples to the north of Israel. Although there was no such land called Russia in Ezekiel's day, the term *Rosh* is amazingly similar to “Ros” (also spelled Rus), the name given to the people that settled along the major rivers of the land now known as Russia, circa 700–800 AD, and from which the terms “Russia” and “Russians”

derive. *Mesbech* and *Tubal* could be renderings of “Moscow” and “Tobolsk,” cities that weren’t to exist for one to two thousand years after Ezekiel lived. Moscow is the capital of Russia, and Tobolsk—until recent times—was one of the most important cities of Siberia. Since the cities didn’t yet exist in his time, it would be understandable that Ezekiel used names that were familiar to him and similar in sound. For these reasons many Bible students believe that the Antichrist will rise out of Russia.

There are also indications in Scripture that the Antichrist could have something to do with Egypt (Daniel 8:22–26). Visions recorded in chapters 2 and 7 of the book of Daniel indicate that the Antichrist will be associated with ten “kings” of nations that were once part of the Roman Empire, which included much of Western and Southern Europe. The book of Revelation says these ten will “give their power and authority to the beast” (Revelation 17:13).

## **The Great Tribulation**

Although most of the world will initially hail the Beast as a political savior, three and a half years after the enactment of the seven-year covenant, he will revoke the peace pact and manifest his satanic nature. At this time he apparently will invade Israel and establish

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himself in Jerusalem, making that city his world capital (Daniel 11:45).

His government will then outlaw all religions, except the worship of the Antichrist and an image of himself that will somehow be empowered to speak and “cause as many as would not worship [it] to be killed” (Revelation 13:14–15). Jesus said that when you see this image, the “abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place [temple] ... *then* there will be *great tribulation*, such as has not been since the beginning of the world” (Matthew 24:15,21). Thus the name given to this period is the “Great Tribulation.” It will be a time when the Beast and his regime will institute a ruthless repression and persecution of believers in God (Daniel 7:21,25; 8:23–24; 11:31–35; 12:7,10; Revelation 13:5–7).

It is at this time that the Antichrist government tries to impose globally the infamous “666” financial system, which we’ll cover next.

## The “Mark of the Beast”

*“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on [in] their right hand or on [in] their foreheads, that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666” (Revelation 13:16–18).*

**T**HIS PROPHECY is remarkable. Think about it: Nearly 2,000 years ago the apostle John, who prior to meeting Jesus had been a fisherman by trade and had been called an “uneducated and untrained” man (Acts 4:13), predicted that a global economic system will one day be instituted in which everyone will be forced to receive a *number*, without which they will not be able to buy or sell. Only in this era of computers and electronic commerce could this prophecy be fulfilled.

There are currently a number of methods commonly used for purchasing items. You can

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use cash, you can write a check, you can use a credit card, or you can use a debit card that instantly deducts the amount from your bank account and deposits it into the account of the merchant.

Smart cards take this several steps further. They look like an ordinary credit card, but there's a big difference: They have a tiny computer chip embedded in their plastic. These electronic marvels not only give you instant access to your bank account, but they can also contain (or access) your passport information, your medical records, driver's license, photographs, biometrics, credit history, and other data. Hundreds of millions of smart cards are in use across Europe in the form of health cards, SIM (Subscriber Identity Module) cards (which turn your phone into a smart card),<sup>97</sup> and ePurse cards. Smart cards are at the heart of the eEurope initiative. Germany ran full trials of their electronic health card in 2006. Other European states and regions already have an equivalent card program in operation. Over time the card could become a kind of medical passport entitling holders to medical care anywhere in the EU.<sup>98</sup>

A parallel program is the biometric passport (AKA, epassport) which began being issued by many countries in 2006. Although not involving commerce,

this does involve an attempt at fail-safe identification. Epassports not only contain your name and personal data in printed form, but an RFID chip embedded in the cover contains the same information in electronic form along with biometric information. There are, however, many privacy concerns, as the information on the chip is not secure from being scanned by identity thieves intent on obtaining your personal information.

We are well on the way to eliminating cash. Advocates of a cashless society have many compelling reasons for it. A primary one is that cash is often used to fund international terrorism, and is the mother's milk of drug smugglers who frequently deal in cash a suitcase. With no cash, the sale of illegal drugs would be greatly hampered. In fact, law enforcement agencies say that to eliminate cash would eliminate many or even most kinds of criminal activity.

### **The ID Hurdle**

Before cash, checks, and credit cards can be phased out completely, an absolutely foolproof identification system must be developed and implemented to prevent identity theft.

Retailers must be sure that the person presenting a card for a transaction is actually the owner of that card.

Various biometric ID systems have already been developed, like fingerprint and hand readers, retinal scanners, and face readers. But for a completely cashless society to work, there would have to be a standardization of the many competing systems, and the scanners would need to be installed at every shop and office, no matter how big or small, where goods or services are sold.

While highly accurate biometric scanners would be very costly to install everywhere they would be needed—not to mention the expensive infrastructure they would need to speedily access the databases where people's biometric details are stored—microchips encased in plastic smart cards and the scanners to read them are a much more cost-efficient alternative.

### **Your Own Personal Microchip Implant**

A cheap and workable solution would be to take a chip similar to those used in smart cards and place it under the skin of each man, woman, and child. It wouldn't even have to store all your personal data, but just a unique identifier. All your data could be stored in gigantic networked databases and your identification code would access it. Once the chip is implanted, it could be read by an inexpensive scanner, similar in function to the

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ones that read bar codes in your local grocery store. You would then become your own smart card—and the very expensive problem of making sure that the owner of the card is who he says he is has been solved!

The chipping of people has quietly begun rolling out in the U.S., via Applied Digital Solutions' VeriChip. In May 2002 the "historic chipping of the Jacobs family" took place. This family and several other volunteers had a chip with a unique identifier injected under their skin.<sup>99</sup> About the size of the tip of a ballpoint pen, it can be read by a handheld VeriChip scanner. The Jacobs family suffers from various ailments and the storage of their medical history provided the logic behind their volunteering to be the test cases. Already, though, Applied Digital Solutions are advertising their services for \$200, along with a \$10 monthly fee.

How long will it be till this chipping of people becomes the norm and we turn to it to facilitate all those daily functions such as shopping, etc.? It has already been adopted in several parts of the world as an identification and tracking system by such diverse groups as law enforcement agencies, vacation clubs, government departments, pet owners, farmers, and concerned parents who want to be able to keep track of their children.

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VeriChip Corp. wants to get under the skin of 1.4 million U.S. servicemen and women. The company is hoping to convince the Pentagon to allow them to insert the chips, known as RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) chips under the skin of the right arms of U.S. servicemen and servicewomen to enable them to scan an arm and obtain that person's identity and medical history. The chips would replace the legendary metal dog tags that have been worn by U.S. military personnel since 1906.

Liz McIntyre, co-author with Katherine Albrecht of *Spychips: How Major Corporations and Government Plan to Track Your Every Move with RFID*, said that VeriChip is "a huge threat" to public privacy.

"They're circling like vultures for any opportunity to get into our flesh," McIntyre said. "They'll start with people who can't say no, like the elderly, sex offenders, immigrants, and the military. Then they'll come knocking on our doors."<sup>100</sup>

A global cashless society is in the making. Fiber optics, satellites, and computer databases have the potential to control the world in a way that boggles the imagination. Many governments

and private corporations worldwide are pursuing policies to eliminate cash and checks, while many other countries are testing various methods of doing business without physical currency. For the first time, the hi-tech means of fulfilling the chilling vision the apostle John received nearly 2,000 years ago is here.

### **The Power Behind the Throne**

The coming world leader will demand the world's worship not merely because he has a severe ego problem.—He will be empowered or possessed by *Satan* himself. “The dragon [Satan] gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2).

Satan has always wanted to be God. This is why he fell in the first place. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! ... For you said to yourself, ‘I will ascend to heaven and rule the angels. I will take the highest throne. ... I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High.’ But instead, you will be brought down to the pit of hell, down to its lowest depths” (Isaiah 14:12–15 TLB).

### **Watch Out for 666!**

What Satan is really after when he causes the Antichrist government to set up the coming global financial system is to gain control over the people of the world and to get them to bow

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down and worship him. This is why the Bible warns, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God. ... [T]hey have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9–11).

The book of Revelation states six times that worshipping the Beast and receiving his Mark leads to damnation. There is a definite link between the two, though at this point in time it is not clear exactly what that will be. At first glance, it would seem the Mark is simply an economic and identification system, but from what the Scriptures indicate, it can lead to much more. Beware!

So when you see the world government arise and its leader demands your allegiance, your loyalty, and even your worship, don't fall for it. Regardless of the economic incentives offered or the retribution that threatens those who refuse his Mark and number, give your love and worship to the true God, your Creator, who loves and cares for you, and who has promised that He will see you through the days ahead if you put your trust in Him. The Bible says, “The people who know their God will be strong” (Daniel 11:32). (For more on this subject, see *The Rise and Fall of the Antichrist*, also from Aurora Production.)

## The Second Coming

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

**H**ERE JESUS is telling us that the world’s darkest period of tribulation and horror will abruptly end with the dawning of the brightest day—the day Jesus Christ returns to gather His people to be with Him!

The book of Revelation tells us that prior to Jesus’ return, the Antichrist will be doing

his damnedest to wipe out all who refuse to worship him and refuse to take his Mark. At the same time it makes clear that God will in turn be unleashing terrible plagues and judgments upon the Antichrist and his forces. So although it will be a time of great trouble for believers, it will also be a time of even greater trouble for their persecutors.

The Bible spells out exactly how long this period of “great tribulation” will last: 3½ years, or 42 months, or 1,260 days (Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 13:5; 12:6). So on the day that the coming world leader breaks that covenant and sets up his image and demands the world’s worship, we will know exactly how long it will be till Jesus returns.

### **Bye-Bye Beast, and Hello Heaven!**

The world will be shocked by the awesome sights and sounds that will herald Jesus’ Second Coming. When the greatest sign of all is revealed, Jesus Himself coming in the clouds, supernaturally beaming God’s power and might around the world, those who have rejected Him and worshiped the Beast will be thunderstruck. “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him” (Revelation 1:7).

But for those of us who know and love the Lord, His return will bring us greater joy

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and deliverance and freedom than we have ever known! God's people who have died since Jesus' days on Earth will be miraculously resurrected in new supernatural bodies, bursting out of their graves and ascending to meet Him in the air. Those of us still alive on Earth will be instantly transformed with new bodies as well, and we'll soar into the clouds to meet the Lord! Jesus will snatch His people out of the reach of their anti-Christ persecutors and whisk them away to the grandest, most thrilling victory celebration that's ever been held—an event known as the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” in Heaven! (Revelation 14:14–16; 19:6–9). Meanwhile, the horrific plagues of the wrath of God will be poured out upon the Beast's forces. Jesus will then lead the superhuman host of Heaven as it returns to Earth to defeat and destroy the Beast and his wicked empire in the climactic battle known as “Armageddon.” The name is derived from a hill in the valley of Jezreel, near Haifa, Israel, under which the ancient city of Megiddo is buried (the Hebrew word *Armageddon* means “the height or mount of Megiddo”). Although the armies of the Antichrist gather at Armageddon, it seems that the focal point of this decisive and horrendous battle will be Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1–5; Revelation 14:20). It will mark the end of man's cruel rule on Earth, as God Himself, through Jesus Christ, the King

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of kings and Lord of lords, and His heavenly forces, take over the world to rule and reign and run it the way it *should* have been run all along, if man had not disobeyed God and gone his own selfish way! And so begins a period known as the “Millennium,” a thousand years of peace and the building of paradise on Earth (Revelation 19:11–21; 20:1–4). (For more on this exciting period to come, don’t miss *From the End to Eternity*, from Aurora Production.)

## Faith to Face the Future

**W**E ARE CERTAINLY LIVING IN EXCITING TIMES and are on the threshold of some cataclysmic changes!

Seeing how prophecies from thousands of years ago accurately predicted world conditions today should encourage you in a number of ways. First of all, it's reassuring that God not only has the power to foresee the future, but that He cared enough about us to tell us what is going to happen in advance. As Jesus said, "I have told you *before* it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may *believe*" (John 14:29).

Similarly, when you realize that the current state of the world was foretold so specifically, it stands to reason that the biblical prophecies which have not yet been fulfilled will *also* come to pass. A world government with a bestial leader and enforced financial system will arise. Persecution of those who refuse to cooperate with the Antichrist regime will take place, but at the same time God will miraculously care for and empower His people to keep them even in trying times. And then God will intervene when Jesus Christ returns to rescue

His people, defeat the forces of evil at the Battle of Armageddon, and establish His everlasting kingdom of love on Earth.

## **No Need to Fear**

As these awesome final events of the Endtime begin to unfold, you don't have to be in fear or confusion, wondering what's going on. Although Jesus warned that in the very last days "men's hearts would be failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26), He also said that those who know and love Him could face these same events positively and victoriously.

He made it clear that as the final signs of the end came to pass, His return to rescue His people was that much closer: "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption [deliverance] draws near" (Luke 21:28). We may not like everything that is happening, and some of it may look pretty bad, but we know the happy ending. In previous persecutions of Christians throughout history, many of which were just as vicious as the ones to come in the Great Tribulation, the people of God as a whole have come through victoriously, stronger, and in many cases greatly multiplied in numbers.

Although the Great Tribulation is a time of great troubles, most of those troubles befall the Antichrist and his followers, not the followers of

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God. Jesus will do many miracles to empower and protect His people. “The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits” (Daniel 11:32).

If you have faith in God and His Word, and you are living close to Him, then even if there’s war and turmoil, confusion and chaos on the *outside*, you can have peace on the *inside*—in your own heart—through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

### **The Best Preparation for the Future**

You can prepare for the future—and for all eternity—by receiving Jesus as your Savior. He *loves* you, and will be with you and will guide you through whatever perilous times you may encounter.

The Bible tells us that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He is the Spirit of love, and He loves you and wants you to know and experience and revel in His love. But God is so great, so almighty, He is far beyond our finite human understanding. This is why He sent Jesus, His Son, to the world: to show us His love and to help us understand what He, God Himself, is like.

“For God so loved the world [you and me], that He gave His only begotten Son [Jesus], that whoever believes in Him should not perish [be separated from God’s love], but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God loves *you* so

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much that He gave Jesus, who lived and died in this world so that you could hear His message of truth and receive the free gift of eternal heavenly life.

If you don't yet know Jesus personally, you can receive Him and all the wonderful things He has to offer you right now. Even if you have questions and doubts about Him, He understands, and if you reach out to Him, He will make Himself real in your life. He says, "I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If you hear My voice and open the door, I will come into you" (Revelation 3:20).

Will you give Him a chance? He's waiting for you. Just sincerely pray the following simple prayer:

*Dear Jesus, I ask You to come into my heart. Please forgive me for all the wrongs I've done, and give me Your gift of everlasting life. Help me to love You, and help me to share Your love and truth with others. Amen.*

Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Receiving Jesus not only guarantees you a brighter future, but a more fulfilled present. May His presence fill and bless your life in every way.

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