

Are We Living in the Last Days?

By Herbert W Armstrong
Circa 1985

How can you know whether we are near "the end of the world"? Can we prove it?

President Reagan, of the United States, spoke of world conditions seemingly indicating we may be nearing "Armageddon."

The atomic scientists some time ago set the doomsday clock one more minute forward from four to only three minutes till "midnight." An editorial in the U.S. News & World Report referred to this seemingly imminent time, saying it would seem that the world's only hope now lies in the sudden appearance of "a strong hand from some place."

Time was, when some wild-eyed freak shouting a "doomsday" warning was ridiculed as "off his rocker." But today serious world leaders and scientists are saying grave things about the current drift in world conditions. Some prominent scientists have said the world's only hope now rests in a single world government, with only one military force, yet in the same breath they admit the utter impossibility of mankind being able to form such a one-world super government.

Strikingly, biblical prophecy says just such a super one world government is to appear. But do these prophecies imply that our present living generation is the one to live into that time?

Even the Original first century apostles expected this end of the world as we know it to occur in their lifetime. Individuals in every century since have believed the world was at "the time of the end" -- that "Armageddon" was near.

But how may we know? How may we be SURE? Or can we know?

Jesus said in Luke 21:28: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." These things he was talking about include many prophesied events now occurring for the first time in history.

One cannot look at one or two superficial signs or events and jump to any sure conclusion. We must comprehend God's overall PURPOSE and how he is working out that purpose. Many prophecies must be considered. We must not guess or surmise, or jump hastily to conclusions.

The Modern World

The modern world really began only about one hundred and fifty years ago. If we have the chronology of human existence about correct, the first human, Adam, was created nearly 6,000 years ago. The Bible shows that God's Master Plan for working out his purpose here below is a 7,000-year plan with some 6,000 years allotted to this world of Satan, followed by 1,000 years of Christ's reign over all nations of the earth. Somewhere around 1,600 years from Adam's creation came the earth wide Flood. How civilization developed prior to the Flood we do not fully know. But we may assume the material civilization progressed no farther than in a similar span after the Flood. So far as we know, therefore, the development of human civilization continued on a comparatively even keel until about 150 years ago.

There was little advancement in human knowledge and material progress until after the invention of the printing press about 1450. Printing made possible the spread and diffusion of knowledge. This diffusion expanded but slightly until the middle of the 19th century. Most modern inventions and facilities have

appeared since A.D. 1850. The increase in knowledge and invention of mechanical facilities has multiplied with constantly increasing momentum since 1850. It is almost as if mankind first appeared on earth about 150 years ago and has been learning and progressing more and more rapidly since.



THE INVENTION of the printing press greatly facilitated the production of reading material, opening the way for the mass dissemination of knowledge and information.
End-Time Prophecies

Now consider some end-time biblical prophecies.

The longest prophecy in the Bible is Daniel 11. The 10th chapter is the prelude and the 12th the completion. In Daniel 11:40, the prophecy comes to the "time of the end" and continues in chapter 12. The prophet Daniel did not understand what he was being told to write. The angel said the words of the prophecy were closed up and sealed until the time of the end when knowledge would be increased, and people would be traveling "to and fro."

That time has come.

Knowledge has been increased at a breathtaking rate in the last 150 years. Indeed, it was claimed that the world's fund of knowledge had doubled during the 1960's -- although this increase was largely in the areas of medicine, science and technology. Also, people are traveling "to and fro" on the earth. The mode of travel from the beginning of civilization until 150 years ago was indeed very slow. Few people traveled more than 50 or 100 miles away from their homes. Travel for millennia was by foot, horseback, camel back, oxcart, rowboat or sailboat.

Construction on the steamboat was not begun by Robert Fulton until 1806. Then came the railroad. Travel by automobile has all come within my personal lifetime. I well remember that when I was eleven years old automobiles were called horseless carriages. "Horseless carriages" were quite a sight. I remember, at the time, when I was eleven, my father calling out, "Oh, come to the front window quick, there goes a horseless carriage." We all rushed to the front window to see the sight. Sure enough it was a "horseless carriage." It was a carriage being pulled by a mule!

When I was twenty-three years old, as assistant secretary of the Chamber of Commerce of South Bend, Indiana, I was given the assignment of persuading the farmers in a township south of the city to sign up a petition agreement allowing a new cross country highway, called the "Dixie Highway," from the Gulf to Canada to go through their township. It was not a paved highway. It was gravel and dirt. Paved highways had not yet come. Today people are traveling to and fro by automobiles railroad and airplanes. Modern airports are jammed with people "going to and fro."



JET-PROPELLED PASSENGER PLANES, some flying at supersonic speeds, have made most parts of the globe easily accessible to travelers.

World-Ruling Kingdoms

In the second chapter of Daniel is a prophecy reaching till the Second Coming of Christ. King Nebuchadnezzar had framed and ruled the first empire of nations in world history. He saw in a dream a most astonishing statue of a man incredibly high. God revealed the meaning to Daniel. The image's head was of fine gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass. Legs of iron, and feet and toes of iron and clay mixed. The head represented Nebuchadnezzar's Chaldean Empire. The silver represented the succeeding world kingdom, which proved to be the Persian Empire. The brass represented a third world kingdom, which proved to be the Greco Macedonian or Grecian Empire; the fourth, represented by the legs of iron, proved to be the Roman Empire with capitals in Constantinople and Rome. The feet and toes represented succeeding smaller empires to follow, leading to the toes representing ten kingdoms in Eastern and Western Europe. The prophecy dates the time in which we are living now. We await the appearance of those ten-toe nations. In the days of those toes, now just ahead of us, a stone supernaturally is to come from heaven, smite the ten-toe nations, replace them, and rule the whole earth forever after (Dan. 2:34, 44). This stone represents Christ's Second Coming to set up the kingdom of God and destroy all this world's governments -- setting up the government of God over all nations. That will be the end of this world -- the end of this man-made civilization as we know it.

Full understanding must include Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and 17. These show the Roman Empire, falling in A.D. 476, replaced by three kingdoms that disappeared, the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, and the Heruli. They were the first three horns of Daniel 7 that were "plucked up by the roots." (verse 8). In other words, these three peoples disappeared from history and we have no historic record of what became of them. There were seven more of the ten horns on this beast yet to follow. The first of that seven was the restoration of the Empire in the West. This happened when, at the behest of the Pope at Rome, Justinian, Emperor at Constantinople, reestablished Imperial authority throughout Italy in A.D. 554. Historians record this as the restoration of the Roman Empire. There followed a series of valleys and peaks in Europe. It reached its next peak in A.D. 800 under Charlemagne, the Frankish head. It reached another mountain peak about the 10th century with Otto the Great of Germany at the helm. At this time it was known as the Holy Roman Empire. The Holy Roman Empire reached another peak with the Habsburg dynasty in Austria. This was followed by another peak under Napoleon, who fled into exile in 1814.

In 1929 Mussolini arranged a Concordat with the Papacy. Then, about 1935 Mussolini, having united Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Italian Somaliland to Italy, proclaimed it to be the reestablishment of the Roman Empire. I announced this ninth restoration myself on radio at the time.

We are now looking for the tenth and last resurrection of the Roman Empire -- the seventh head of this Beast of the 17th chapter of Revelation (Rev. 17:12), which is also pictured by the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image of Daniel 2:40-44. Since these toes were on the two feet that represented Eastern and Western Europe, there is strong likelihood that this final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire will include Iron Curtain nations of Eastern Europe as well as nations in Western Europe. (Write for our two booklets "The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last" or "Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?")

They will form a third gigantic world power probably as great or even greater than the U.S.S.R. or United States of America.

These ten toes of Daniel 2:40-44 will be destroyed by Christ at his Second Coming and will be replaced by the world-ruling government of the Kingdom of God, with Christ at its head and all the resurrected saints also ruling under Christ.

Jesus' Principal Prophecy

Now consider the principal prophecy of Jesus Christ himself. It is found in Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Mark 13.

But we quote from Matthew's account. Jesus with his disciples had just come out from the Temple (verse 1). He and his disciples were looking at the buildings of the temple.

"See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." That event happened in A.D. 70 in the lifetime of those disciples.

Then, a little later, as Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives with some of his disciples, they asked him, "When shall these things be?" They referred to the destruction of the temple, which, I repeat, actually did occur in their lifetime in A.D. 70. But then the disciples added another question. "... And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" The disciples expected the end of the world in their own lifetime, so they connected this question with the destruction of the temple. Jesus knew, of course, the end of the world would not occur for more than another 1,950 years. So he answered only their first question first, for the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.

Jesus then said, "Take heed that no man deceive you." He was speaking to his own disciples about being deceived in their lifetimes. He continued, "For many shall come in my name, saying I [Jesus] am Christ; and shall deceive many." How could they be deceived by the teaching that Jesus was the Christ?

Many did come in his name claiming to represent him, saying that Jesus was the Christ and they deceived the many even in that very first century. Let me explain a very important fact here. Soon after Christ's ascension to heaven and the founding of the church in A.D. 31, a violent controversy arose, according to church history, as to whether the gospel to be proclaimed was the gospel OF Christ, or a gospel ABOUT Christ. The latter won out. False prophets did arise in the first century, saying Jesus was the Christ, but omitting altogether Jesus' gospel which was the message of the coming world ruling kingdom of God to rule all nations after Christ's Second Coming.

Different Gospel Preached

In Galatians 1:6-7, we see they were already preaching a different gospel than Jesus' gospel of the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul also spoke of these false prophets preaching a different gospel in II Corinthians, the 11th chapter. To the church in the very first century, he wrote:

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him" (verses 3-4).

Of those false prophets claiming to speak in Jesus' name, Paul added: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his [Satan's] ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (verses 13-15).

These were actually the ministers of Satan the devil, but came in Jesus' name, saying that Jesus was the Christ. However, they misrepresented Jesus, so that in fact they were preaching about "another Jesus" -- a different Jesus (verse 4).



PHOTO SHOWS Herbert W. Armstrong making an early World Tomorrow radio broadcast. From the smallest beginnings, God's work has grown to international scope, carrying the true gospel to all the world as a final end-time witness.

Just What was Jesus' Gospel?

Jesus came as a messenger from God bearing a message about the coming kingdom of God to take over and rule all nations.

That was Jesus' gospel. Notice the gospel which Jesus proclaimed.

In Mark 1:1, it begins to relate the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It mentions how John the Baptist prepared the way, and how Jesus was baptized by John. Then in verse 14, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God" what gospel did Jesus preach? -- "the gospel of the kingdom of God." That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the gospel proclaimed by the apostle Paul to gentiles (Acts 20:25, 28:23, 31).

Mark this well. That gospel was not proclaimed to the world for 1,900 years. In the very first century, they turned to a different gospel -- a gospel about Christ, but not the gospel OF Christ. Read that again. To this very day, nearly all churches and evangelists preach their own gospel ABOUT Christ, but not the gospel OF Christ about the coming kingdom of God to rule the world.

For 1,900 years traditional Christianity has failed to preach about. Jesus as coming KING and world ruler in the coming kingdom of God to replace Satan on the throne of the whole earth. A FALSE GOSPEL has been universally proclaimed. Now with all this in mind, return to Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24. He was warning his own disciples about false prophets coming in his name saying he, Jesus was the Christ, and deceiving the MANY -- not the few, but the MANY. That started in the very first century soon after the church was founded and has continued to this very day. It is true almost universally in a professed Christianity to this minute.

True Gospel Withheld 1,900 Years

But in January 1934, Jesus Christ began proclaiming through me for the first time in 1,900 years the true gospel of the kingdom of God. It spread coast to coast across the United States and Canada. Nineteen years later, January 1953, that gospel went out on the world's most powerful radio station, Radio Luxembourg, to all Europe and Britain, and almost immediately after that on other radio stations in Taiwan, Radio Ceylon, Radio Monte Carlo, stations in South America and elsewhere. Soon it was going to Australia, New Zealand and many other parts of the world.

And now, at last, we can say that gospel has gone into every nation on earth.

Now proceed with Jesus' prophecy: Matthew 24:5, Jesus had said many would come in his name pretending to be his ministers, yet deceiving the many. That did happen in their lifetime in the first century and has continued even since our program went on the air in 1934, and the same gospel Jesus and the apostles preached began going out in the PLAIN TRUTH magazine, which now has reached into every nation on earth, with a circulation of over eight million households every issue. Notice, now what Jesus said in verse six, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." In other words the end of the world was not yet in their lifetime. In verse seven, "For," continuing, "nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places." Verse 8, "All these are the beginning of sorrows."



THE GOOD NEWS is that today's ugly, polluted, crime-ridden cities will soon be replaced by ones that are well-planned, uncrowded, peaceful and beautiful -- joys to live and work in.

All these things have continued from the first century. Verse 9. "Then they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you" These things did happen to those very disciples. Most or all of the apostles were martyred except the apostle John.

The Sign of the "End of the World"

Then in verse 14 Jesus comes to answer his disciples' second question: "... and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (verse 3). In verse 14 he answered that question, Jesus himself knowing it would not happen until some nineteen hundred years later. Here is Jesus' own answer to when the end of the world would come.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." That gospel was not preached to the world from about the middle of the first century until near the middle of the twentieth century.

Jesus was speaking, not of the end of the earth's existence, but of the end of this world this age this present civilization in a world ruled by Satan, who still sits on the throne of the whole earth. However, remember Satan sits on that throne only because God allows it. But God shows us in Bible prophecies, not the date or the year, but the approximate time when he will send Jesus Christ to end this world.

Basic Law of Coming World Government

At that time, Jesus Christ will come in all the supreme power and glory of God to sit on earth's throne and rule over all nations. He will then set up the kingdom of God, which will be the government of God (not of Satan) in the hands of the born family of God under Christ, ruling all nations with the government of God.



HIROSHIMA after the bomb. From the comparatively primitive nuclear device that devastated this city mankind has developed the capability of destroying all forms of life many times over.

All governments are based on foundational laws. The foundational law of the government of God over the whole world will be the law of God. That law may be expressed in the one word "LOVE." Jesus magnified that law to mean love toward God and love toward neighbor. This, in turn, was magnified by the Ten Commandments -- the first four giving four broad principles defining love toward God, the last six commandments defining in broad principles love toward neighbors.

This very work of God, from which you have received this booklet, is one of the evidences that the end of this world of Satan and civilization as we know it is very near its end.

The Great Tribulation

In these days, after the proclaiming of the gospel of the kingdom of God,

"... shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved [alive]: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (verses 21 and 22).

Many other scriptures show that conditions will become more frightful than ever before or ever shall be again on earth. Such conditions are rapidly escalating at this moment. Person is against person, even within a large proportion of families. Group is against group. Nation is against nation. Violence is escalating as never before in history. Terrorism is throwing fear and consternation into people all over the world.

Apostle Paul's warning

Truly we have come to the time warned of by the apostle Paul, in II Timothy 3,

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors' heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: ... ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (verses 1-5, 7).

This is a prophecy, as it plainly states, for the last days. When I was a little boy, ninety years ago, those conditions were not true or escalating as they have been within the last twenty or thirty years.

Now notice again, Jesus said in Matthew 24:22, that except these terrifying days should be cut short, no flesh would be saved alive. Not a human being would survive.

A prophecy in Ezekiel 6:6 states, "In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate" That prophecy is speaking of this same time. The weapons have never existed in all history that could have laid all cities waste until the hydrogen bomb of some thirty years ago. How significant that this became possible only during the time while this gospel of the kingdom was going from nation to nation into all the world for a witness to all nations.

Great Tribulation Cut Short

But, here comes the world's one and only great and supreme hope. Jesus said in Matthew 24:22 that "... for the elects' sake [his one true church] those days shall be shortened." In other words, God will not move to cut short the continuation of this present civilization as we know it, until humanity has come to the very brink of its last gasp. If God delayed longer, human science, technology, engineering and government would be the Frankenstein monster that would blast every living person out of existence.

God is not going to intervene or send Jesus Christ to set up a better civilization and the wonderful, happy, peace-loving world tomorrow, until humanity and its leaders have had to admit their utter failure in providing peaceful, happy and useful lives on this earth. Even today, most people in the Western world do not want to hear much about God. They want God to "keep himself out of their lives."

The very first man God created. Adam, rejected the tree of life which meant reliance on God and the gift of eternal life from God. Instead he chose to rely on himself and his own mind to guide his life and solve

all his problems. To this very day, the nations and the leaders of this world still try to rely on themselves and human attempts at solution of their escalating problems. The world still refuses to rely on God.



THE MOUNT OF OLIVES as it looks today. It is at this very location that Jesus Christ will soon return to earth to set up a peaceful and just world government.

It is only when the world and its leaders have come to the place where they have to realize their utter helplessness before their own problems and that their only hope from here on is reliance on and obedience to God, that God will intervene and bring about the end of this world by sending Jesus Christ. When Jesus does come in all the dazzling splendor and the power and the glory of the great Creator God, as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, humanity is going to be forced to realize that only reliance on God can save humans alive and bring in peace with happiness, joy, and invigorating productivity.

Also Foretold by Daniel

Now once again back to the 12th chapter of Daniel. Just after he spoke of the time of the end (Daniel 11:40), Daniel speaks also of the same great tribulation -- a time of trouble greater than ever before or ever to come.

"And at that time shall Michael [a great archangel standing against Satan] stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life ..."
(Daniel 12:1, 2).

This is speaking of the Second Coming of Christ when the dead in Christ shall rise first.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we [the saved of God's true church] which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Meeting Christ in the Air -- Where Then?

And where do we go from there? In that same day Jesus' feet will descend on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem on the east (Zech. 14:4). (Write for our free book "The Wonderful World Tomorrow -- What It Will be Like, which explains in detail the world to come.)

We read in Revelation 20:1-2 that at the time of Christ's coming, Satan shall be removed from the throne of world rulership. Jesus Christ will then sit on that throne over the whole earth. In Revelation 3:21, Jesus

said to those in his own true church, that if we overcome Satan and the evils of this world, he will grant that we will sit with him on that throne.

Jesus also said in Revelation 2:26-27 that if we, his own people, overcome we will be given power over the nations, and we shall rule them, under Christ. In Revelation 5:10, he says that we who are true believers in his own church shall be priests and kings, and we shall reign on the earth.