

CHURCH OF GOD

BIBLE COURSE

LESSON NO. 2

WORLD PEACECOMING IN OUR TIME!

The search for world peace continues while arsenals of weapons grow larger. Experts predict the earth will soon become an incinerated relic - UNLESS world conditions are dramatically REVERSED. What does the future hold for mankind?

World leaders and scientists are frankly *frightened* by the prospects of the future! They warn that man now possesses the means of committing COSMOCIDE-suicide of the whole human race-and even talk in terms of "overkill." They realize something totally unforeseen must soon occur to stop the present trend of world events - or humanity will finally DESTROY itself!

WHAT STATESMEN AND SCIENTISTS WARN

In 1961 the late U.S. President John F Kennedy warned a hushed United Nations Assembly-. "Mankind must put an end to war - or war will put an end to mankind... "Today," he said, "every inhabitant of this planet must contemplate the day when this planet may no longer be habitable The mere existence of modern weapons-10 MILLION TIMES more powerful than any that the world has ever seen, and only minutes away from any target on earth-is a source of horror....

"Together," said President Kennedy grimly, "we shall save our planet - or together we shall perish in its flames" (emphasis ours throughout lesson).

What President Kennedy told the United Nations in 1961 was not the ranting of a wild-eyed fanatic, but is the day-to-day reality of the world in which we live. Today, the estimated number of stockpiled nuclear bombs is already enough to wipe out the world's population many times over!

Former U.N. Secretary-General U Thant once warned: "I do not wish to seem overdramatic, but I can only conclude from the information that is available to me as Secretary-General, that the members of the United Nations have perhaps 10 years left in which to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve the human environment, to defuse the population explosion, and to supply the required momentum to world development efforts."

Scientists are also very concerned that the days of man's existence are numbered. The late Dr. George Kistiakowsky, former head of the explosives division of the Manhattan Project (which produced the atom bomb) and one of the world's most knowledgeable scientists on nuclear weapons, made this frightening statement: "Given the present geopolitical trends and the quality of political leaders that burden mankind, it would be a miracle if no nuclear warheads were exploded in anger before the end of this century, and only a bit smaller miracle if that did not lead to a nuclear holocaust."

Many other world-renowned statesmen and scientists, too numerous to quote in this lesson, speak fearfully of the END OF THE WORLD - the END of human civilization!

BUT THE ARMS RACE CONTINUES

In spite of these terrifying, imagination-defying facts, the arms race continues to escalate toward nuclear insanity! One example is "MIRV," which stands for "Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicle." Instead of one missile carrying one warhead, the Soviets and Americans have developed and deployed missiles that carry many warheads. One

such MIRV can do the same job as could 10-14 missiles previously. With MIRV alone, the U.S. is capable of destroying the Soviet Union many times over! And, of course, Russian MIRVs could similarly "overkill" the United States of America!

Staggering, but a fact nevertheless!

The arms race is also spreading to outer space. The Soviets have developed a "killer satellite" capable of blowing up American early warning satellites. But what is there to prevent the design of satellites capable of carrying hydrogen-bomb warheads and dropping them on pre-selected targets? Politicians and military experts generally agree that whoever gains military control of space will be able to rule the world!

Many other bizarre, frightening weapons are in various stages of development. These include the pure fusion weapon (a "clean" H-bomb), the neutron bomb and the laser bomb. Scientists say any of these weapons theoretically has enough destructive potential to annihilate all life on earth!

It sounds incredible, but it's true! And the record of history proves that every weapon man has ever developed was eventually used!

CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Nuclear warfare is only one of many ways that could bring about the total destruction of mankind. Though the subject has been given little publicity over the years, some nations are now producing new super-weapons that may be even deadlier than nuclear bombs! A number of nations, including the U.S. and U.S.S.R., already have a chemical and biological warfare potential

Tens of thousands of gallons of deadly nerve gas-odorless, tasteless and virtually invisible-have already been manufactured and stored. One drop, inhaled, or applied to the skin, can kill instantly!

Speaking about biological warfare, Dr. Barry Commoner, former director of Washington University's Center for the Biology of Natural Systems, warned that chemical and biological agents make nuclear weapons "look like a child's toy."

Weapons of a chemical or biological nature are far less expensive to produce than complicated nuclear weapons.

But a huge question mark hangs over the advisability of using biological weapons on an enemy nation. The best-informed scientists are afraid that an all-out biological war might result in worldwide epidemics!

Only one thing is certain. No one can predict what actually would happen, because such biological weapons have never been (nor can they ever be) adequately tested until they are actually used on the battlefield!

CAN MAN-MADE PLAGUES BE CONTROLLED?

Scientists are faced with the grim question of whether or not a man-made plague could be controlled, once started, since full-scale testing is impossible. Dr. Commoner asserted that even natural epidemics are poorly understood, and that we can rarely predict how fast they will spread, or how many people will be affected.

Moreover, in biological warfare, he warned it is likely that the infectious agents will not be those that occur in natural epidemics, but special variants selected or modified in the laboratory. In this case it would be nearly impossible to be confident about the actual course of an artificial epidemic, once it started. It might fizzle out, or it might spread so unexpectedly as to engulf friend and foe alike!

A biological warfare experiment that aptly illustrates Dr. Commoner's fears took place during World War II.

Britain conducted limited biological weapons tests as early as 1941, when there was widespread fear that the Axis Powers might use germ warfare. In one test, Gruinard, a remote island off the northwest coast of Scotland, was sprayed with anthrax bacteria. The targets were sheep, which soon became infected and died. But the anthrax bacteria were so durable that the isle is still unsafe for people today! It is expected to remain that way for at least another 100 years!

Because of the grave doubts arising from such experiments, some observers ominously conclude that "to initiate the use of plague or anthrax, diseases that can kill more than 90 percent of their victims, would be to set in motion a DOOMSDAY MACHINE on the planet..." (Seymore M. Hersh, New York Times Magazine, Aug. 25, 1968).

OTHER GLOBAL CRISES

There are yet several other global crises that could contribute to the utter destruction of mankind in the not-too-distant future.

Human life can only be sustained by air, water and food. But man is polluting and poisoning all three of these necessities. Air pollution is now recognized as a growing international menace - one that not only threatens the health of man, but seriously affects the continued existence of all life.

Water pollution is another massive threat. For example, most U.S. rivers and lakes are so seriously polluted that supplies of drinkable water in many places have reached a CRISIS STAGE! Now, increasingly, it is being found that pollution is also seeping into underground water supplies. A study by the U.S. Public Health Service indicates that millions of people in the United States are drinking water that is unfit for human consumption!

Man is infamous for depleting and ruining the soil out of which his food must grow. More recently, he has vastly speeded up the process by using artificial fertilizers, which actually defeat their very purpose by locking up other soil elements, thereby robbing vegetables, grains and fruits of the life sustaining minerals and vitamins so necessary for good health. Modern man also uses poisonous insecticides, which not only exterminate insects, but also many helpful forms of life in the soil and air. Insecticides also enter the ecological web of life and threaten the extinction of birds and mammals. Even man himself is potentially in danger!

Other potential dangers to life are the host of inadequately tested rodenticides, fumicides, herbicides, flavor enhancers and artificial preservatives. Scientists fear that these and other products of our modern society could cause irrevocable damage to succeeding generations. Add to these urgent problems the worldwide revolution in the weather-droughts, floods and earthquakes-and epidemics of disease. And then there is the growing threat of the POPULATION EXPLOSION!

"POPULATION BOMB" a THREAT to HUMAN SURVIVAL

Many leading scientists have warned that the greatest single crisis facing the world is the population explosion. Although this explosive growth of the world's population has slowed somewhat within the last decade, it is still an unsettling fact that the sheer numbers are still increasing at the same time that fewer and fewer nations are self-sufficient in food production. Just six countries are the major food exporters to the rest of the world community. If one or more of these exporter countries should experience serious shortfalls in food production as a result of bad weather or other unforeseen factors lasting several years, millions will go hungry and vast numbers will starve to death! Population experts reveal that if present trends continue, the earth's population will number more than six billion people by the 2000! How will they be fed?

NEEDED: "A STRONG HAND FROM SOMEPLACE"

An accurate appraisal of MAN'S ONLY HOPE for survival appeared in a leading U.S. newsmagazine a number of years ago. It indicated that among government officials the view is gaining acceptance that tensions and world problems are fast becoming too deep-seated to be solved except "by a strong hand from someplace."

That strong hand is coming - but from a source most people least expect! The prophet Isaiah reveals that source in your Bible: "Behold, the LORD GOD will come with STRONG HAND, and his arm shall rule for him" (I sa. 40:10).

Your Bible shows there IS HOPE! The great God of your Bible says He is going to send Jesus Christ again - this time to SAVE US from ourselves and to establish the government of God on earth! He will not allow the misguided scientific genius of man to destroy all life on this planet!

Think of it!

The glorified Christ-returning with the splendor, supernatural POWER and GLORY of God Almighty-coming to save mankind alive-coming to STOP escalating wars, nuclear mass destruction, human pain and suffering-coming to usher in peace, abundant well-being, happiness and joy for all mankind!

PROPHESIED CENTURIES AGO

The sad state of our world was prophesied and written in advance. More than 1,900 years ago, the greatest "newscaster" the world has ever known foretold today's chaotic world conditions! He foresaw today's scientific discoveries and technological advancements, and the outcome of it all.

This famous newscaster knew that men would produce the destructive forces that now threaten cosmocide! He warned: "And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved ALIVE". (Mark 13:20).

This great newscaster was Jesus Christ of Nazareth-the same Jesus who is coming again to intervene at the last moment to save humanity from extinction. What He prophesied has been written in your Bible all these centuries. No other book is as up to date as *your Bible!*

Jesus Christ prophesied today's world conditions in vivid language. He foretold the wars, famines, disease epidemics and natural disasters that are now occurring increasingly before our very eyes! Scientists and world leaders-most of whom know little of Bible prophecy, and even reject the Bible readily admit that events He prophesied are taking place *right now!* For some time influential people have been using biblical terminology to describe current world conditions. Notice what a few have said:

Dr. Binay Sen, former director of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said, "if the rate of food production cannot be significantly increased, we must be prepared for the four horsemen of the Apocalypse."

Robert S. McNamara, former president of the World Bank: "We have to see the population problem as part ... of a much wider social and political crisis that grows deeper with each decade and threatens to round off this century with years of unrest and turbulence, a *"time of troubles"* (emphasis ours) during which the forces of historical change threaten our frail twentieth-century society with disintegration."

Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos, research writers: "When we consider the planet's still-increasing population, we may even wonder whether the traditional figure of the harvester may not be turning before our eyes into that other image of the man with the scythe - the archetypal image of Death itself."

PROPHECY IS FOR TODAY!

But some will still object. "There have always been 'prophets of doom.' People thought the world was coming to an end in the Middle Ages when the black death struck Europe."

These skeptics simply do not understand God's *timetable* of prophecy. The end of man's rule *must*, and *will*, come as God has scheduled it. Though some had ignorantly thought otherwise, the end of man's rule was *not* due in the Middle Ages.

We need to understand that every prophecy has a definite time setting - usually *not* in the prophet's own day. Most prophecies of the Bible are yet to be fulfilled and are *for our time!*

Jesus taught that there is a *timetable* of prophecy - that certain specific events must occur in the months and years ahead *before* He returns to rescue humanity from annihilation. Let's begin to understand these prophecies. Let's learn exactly what the world's greatest newscaster foretold for this end-time" generation!

But before we begin, be sure you have your Bible in front of you. You should turn to all the scripture references given in answer to the questions we will ask - *and carefully read them*. PROVE the truth of God *for yourself* in your Bible!

To derive the most benefit from your studies, it is advisable (though not required) to also write these verses down on paper and file them in a notebook so you can readily review the material at any time.

Now let's begin.

SCOFFERS in the LAST DAYS

Ours is an age of agnosticism, of atheism, of religious zeal and lukewarmness. The vast majority are skeptical of or confused about the existence of a higher power. Many scoff at the idea of the prophesied intervention of Jesus Christ in world affairs.

Christ is no longer expected to come back, said the late John Robinson, former bishop of Woolwich, England, in his book *The New Reformation?* "I believe," wrote Bishop Robinson, "that we must designate ours a post-Christian era, in the sense that a Christ is no longer expected. (The present generation is) unable to recognize Jesus as the Christ. They ask "why should we see in this historical character the focus of all our hopes or the answer to all our problems?" (pp. 35-36).

Notice that your Bible foretold this time of scoffers and skepticism.

1. What did the Apostle Peter say would signal the "last days"? 2 Peter 3:3-4.

COMMENT: "Scoffers" is rendered "mockers" in the Moffatt translation

2. Does God address a rebuke against such skepticism, especially to Israel? Ezek. 12:21-23.

COMMENT: Surprising as it may seem, this prophecy and the entire book of Ezekiel were written primarily for *our* day! When this book was written, the House of Israel (not to be confused with *the modern* State of Israel) had already fallen and been taken into captivity (from which it never returned) a full *120 years earlier*.

History reveals that the 10-tribed House of Israel (the northern kingdom) was taken captive by the Assyrians by 721 B.C. By the time God spoke this prophecy to Ezekiel (shortly after 600 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was attacking the House of Judah (the southern kingdom). Ezekiel was already in a Babylonian camp (Ezek. 1: 1), far from where the 10 tribes of Israel had been carried by Assyria.

God gave Ezekiel a message to be delivered to Israel - a message about a *future* captivity. Yet Israel had already gone into its first captivity 120 long years before! Ezekiel's captors would *not allow* him to go to Israel to deliver that message. God *knew* he would not be able to go before He gave him the prophecy. So, plainly, God did not expect the message to be delivered then and there.

But Ezekiel wrote the message so it would be preserved. And today that message is in the hands of the people to whom it was sent. It is also being proclaimed via radio, television and the printed page *at precisely the time when God intended that they receive it!*

3. Does God say that the doubter's proverb would prove worthless, and that the time would come when every vision would be fulfilled? Ezek. 12:23, 25. What is the prophecy the modern-day descendants of Israel don't want to believe? Verse 20. COMMENT: The people say the elapsed time has already been so long that it is obvious the vision will *never* come to pass. God's answer is that everything will occur as *prophesied!*

4. Even if people admit the fact that this calamity will come to pass, how do they try to rationalize it away? Verse 27. Does God make it clear that there will be no reprieve from this sentence? Verse 28.

5. Before God sends *major* punishment upon a nation, does He always first reveal it to His servants? Amos 3:6-7.

COMMENT: Throughout the Bible we find that God has always given people ample opportunity to repent-to *quit sinning before* sending punishment for breaking His law, which defines a way of life that leads to peace, happiness and abundant well-being. Time after time God sent His prophets to warn the nations of impending punishments for their disobedience. Yet, in nearly every case, the warning fell on deaf ears!

6. Hosea 5:9 calls the end time the "day of rebuke." Do verses 8 and 9 indicate an end-time warning ministry to the nations of Israel? compare these verses with Hosea 7:12.

7. For what age was Isaiah's prophecy primarily put in writing? Isa. 30:8. (The better rendering of "time to come" is "the latter day" as given in the margin of many translations.) What does God say the character of people in "the latter day" will be like? Verses 9-11. Will their punishment come *suddenly*, though obvious signs had previously been visible? Verse 13.

8. Is one of the signs of the imminence of dire calamity the world's tendency to ignore and deny the peril? I Thess. 5:3.

9. What message does Isaiah give the mockers and skeptics? Isa. 28:22. Does God warn them of great destruction upon the whole earth? Same verse. Is it linked with the time of God's intervention in world affairs? Verse 21.

COMMENT: *Newsweek* magazine once spoke of a growing modern phenomenon. It asserted: "The U.S. public is the most communication-glutted group of people in world history. Daily bombarded by 'facts' which conflict, daily told opposite versions of the same incidents, hopelessly incapable in this complicated world of sorting out the truth, a great many Americans have undoubtedly built a hard shell of skepticism around themselves." The same certainly could be said about most of the developed world today.

Feeling incapable of determining the truth in what they read, see and hear, most people have developed a skeptical, cynical attitude toward taking any warning seriously - even from God Himself. This attitude is one of the curses of our modern age.

God's warnings for this end-time age have been recorded in the Bible. But because God seems so unreal to most people, they simply assume the prophecies of the Bible are irrelevant and of no consequence to them whatsoever.

Thus millions today plod on like ignorant sheep-headless, careless, calloused and skeptical. They are asleep at the switch-unaware of the grave peril ahead. They are like passengers on a train thundering down the tracks, completely unaware that a bridge is out just ahead.

What about you - your household? Are you cynical? Skeptical? Unbelieving?

The world does not have long to wait before astounding, earth-shaking events will begin to shake people out of complacency. It won't be long before the hard shells of skepticism are smashed and shattered!

PROPHECY HAS NOT FAILED!

Let's understand once and for all that prophecy has not failed. We need to realize that every prophecy has a definite time setting, a time usually not in the prophet's own day. One full third of the Bible is prophecy - and about 90 percent of that prophecy still pertains to *this* prophesied "end time"!

With this in mind, let's notice certain KEY prophecies.

1. Was Joel's prophecy for his own day, or for the distant future? Joel 1:2-3, 15. What is the "day of the Lord"? Is it the time when God directly intervenes in world affairs? Joel 3:1-2, 11-14. When will this period of time occur - after great signs in the heavens? Verses 15-16. Is this referring to the time when Christ will return? Matt. 24:29-31.

COMMENT: The "day of the Lord" is mentioned in many prophecies of the Bible. It always refers to the time when God will intervene in world affairs, culminating in the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

2. Did the prophet Isaiah also prophesy of this time? Isa. 24:17-21. What else will happen "in that

day"? Isa. 2:11-12.

3. Will all of the prophecies regarding the day of the Lord be fulfilled? Rev. 10:5-7.

4. Will any of the God-given prophecies FAIL to occur? Isa. 55:1 1. Will the warning message given to the people by God's servants be fulfilled? Ezek. 33:30-33. Is it a pleasant message? Verses 25-29.

COMMENT: Most people today are tired of hearing "bad news." Nevertheless, God's prophecies include BAD news for all those who rebel against Him and trample on His laws! But these prophecies also include much GOOD NEWS on beyond the prophesied time of world trouble and chaos (Isa. 2:14; Mic. 4:1-4). *Many* of the prophecies foretell a time of peace, of happiness, of restoration, of joy, of great prosperity and physical wealth for those who serve and OBEY God. We'll learn more about this GOOD NEWS in a soon-coming lesson.

THE WORLD WOULD BE DECEIVED

1. While sitting on the Mount of Olives, Christ's disciples questioned Him about His Second Coming (Matt. 24: 3). Did Jesus foretell that MANY deceivers would arise to deceive MANY people before His return? Verses 5, 11, 24. Are they the ministers of the arch deceiver himself? 2Cor. 11:13-15

Is the *whole world* deceived as a result of their activities? Rev. 12:9.

2. But would the TRUTH of God also be proclaimed with power around the world before the Second Coming of Christ? Matt. 24:14. Would this clearly signal the fact that the end of this age is indeed *very near*? Same verse, last part.

COMMENT: God will not leave the world without a warning *witness*. Today, His servants are powerfully proclaiming His truth worldwide via the media of radio, television and the printing press. You are studying His message *right now* as you study your Bible with this Correspondence Course.

3. In the meantime, would the deceivers become extremely active? 11 Tim. 3:13. Would men have only a "form"-an outward show-of godliness? Verse 5. Wasn't Paul clearly speaking of the end time – our perilous age? Verse 1.

4. Did Jesus prophesy that some of the false teachers would even claim He has already returned? Matt. 24:23-26.

COMMENT: As we'll see in the next lesson, there will not be the slightest doubt that Christ has returned when His Second Coming *really does occur!*

WHEN WILL CHRIST RETURN ?

Perhaps you have heard preachers declare: "The Lord may come *tonight*." Is it true the Second Coming of Jesus Christ could occur at any minute? What did He say about it?

Jesus warned: "Take heed that ye be not deceived"!

1. What is one of the deceits the false ministers would preach? Luke 21:8. Notice the words "the time draweth near."

COMMENT: According to the original Greek in which the New Testament was written, the false message of those claiming to be the ministers of Christ is: "The time HAS COME near," or "The time is at hand" (*REVISED STANDARD VERSION*). In other words, "The Lord may come tonight."

What about it, then? Could Christ return at any moment?

Your Bible teaches that there is a definite *sequence of events* that must occur first! Study carefully ALL of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. These chapters clearly reveal that specific events *must occur before* Christ returns!

2. Did Christ explain clearly that certain events would have to take place before the "end"? Luke 21:8-11.

COMMENT: Notice that the King James English of 1611 is not at all clear in verse 9. Instead of "by and by", the original Greek phrase is better translated "immediately." Parallel accounts in Matt 24:6 and Mark 13:7 correctly read "the end is *not yet*."

3. But once the terrible events Jesus enumerated in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 begin to accelerate, will they all be completed in the lifetime of one generation? Matt. 24:34; Mark 13: 30; Luke 21:32.

THE "SIGNS OF THE TIMES"

There is a parallel to the widespread lack of understanding of prophetic events culminating in the return of Jesus Christ The Jews at the time of His *First* Coming also lacked understanding and therefore did not fully recognize or accept Christ as the *prophesied* Messiah.

Jesus told the religious leaders of His day that the "signs" accompanying His ministry should have been *proof* enough that He was the prophesied Christ. The Old Testament prophecies, with which they were thoroughly familiar, had foretold the *exact time and manner* of His appearance on earth!

Yet they *refused* to believe Him!

1. What did these scoffing Pharisees and Sadducees ask Jesus to show them? Matt. 16:1. How did He answer them? Verses 2-3.

COMMENT: The religious leaders of Christ's day didn't understand the "signs of the times." Yet they had been taught the Messiah was to come, for that very message was repeated in nearly every book of the Old Testament. In verse 3, Jesus showed them they could understand-if *they really wanted to!*

2. What additional sign-besides the plain Old Testament prophecies they already knew- did Jesus give? Matt. 16:4. What was the "sign of the prophet Jonas"? Matt. 12:39-40.

COMMENT: Atheists and agnostics scoff at the biblical record of "Jonah and the whale."

Nevertheless, Jesus told the Pharisees that He would be in His grave for the *same length of time* Jonah was in the great fish. This was to be the special "sign" to His generation that He really was the prophesied Christ!

3. Did that sign come to pass? Read Matthew 27: 57-66 and 28:1-6. Notice especially verse 6.

COMMENT: Two women came to see the tomb where Christ had been laid. When they arrived, they found it empty. They were told that Christ had risen-"as he said"-after three days and three nights.

The sign had come to pass!

Jesus proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that He *was* the prophesied Messiah and Savior of mankind!

"SIGNS" OF OUR TIMES

1. As Jesus explained to His disciples the events that would precede His intervention (Matt. 24:3-41), what else did He say would occur in the end time besides the coming of many false prophets? Matt.24:6-7.

COMMENT: World War I commenced in 1914. Nation has continued to rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. Just since World War II alone, there have been more than 150 armed conflicts around the world! We are now fast approaching the third and *final* world war!

2. Is *famine* one of the major signs indicating that Christ's intervention in world affairs is near? Matt.24:7.

COMMENT: The first decade or so after World War II, food production kept up with population in the underdeveloped countries. But the tables turned in 1958, a crucial year. From that time till now, the birthrate outraced and passed the plough.. More and more had less and less to eat. Since 1958 the crisis has generally grown worse. The first shocking blow came in 1965-1966 with severe drought and threatening famine in India.

Disaster was barely staved off in 1966. What will happen the next year the world faces drought and famine? Remember: every year world population grows another 80 million. Every three years the equivalent of another United States is added to the world's population! Many areas of the world face a severe crisis as population passes food production.

In Central and South America, some of the most miserable and depressing poverty can be seen. Yet, in several of these nations the population is expected to double within 25 years! This was once thought to be impossible.

The facts of lagging world food production, combined with the reality of the population explosion, add up to one thing: a crisis of awesome proportions is exploding on the world's doorstep! The *several million* dying each year *now* from starvation could soon be multiplied a hundred times. Hundreds of millions of human beings now drawing breath could perish in world-girdling famines! It is not at all a pleasant thought to contemplate. As C.R Snow put it, "We shall see them doing so on our television sets." Even the affluent nations of the world are *not* immune to this dire threat!

KILLER DISEASES - GLOBAL PANDEMICS

1. What else was prophesied to occur? Matt. 24:7.

COMMENT: Pestilence is partly the natural result of food shortages and consequent malnutrition, which breaks down the body's natural defenses. In addition, huge concentrations of population are ready-made tinder boxes of potential disease epidemics. More and more crowding means more waste and refuse, more garbage, more pollution of the water, air and land. And *more disease!* Under crowded conditions, an epidemic can spread from person to person like wildfire. All the great pestilences of the past were just such contagious diseases.

It is not inconceivable that a flu epidemic similar to the one in 1918 could strike. Despite medical science, disease germs, bacteria and viruses have built up an amazing *resistance* to the "wonder drugs" of a few years ago. Through mutation and adaption, their resistance to modern drugs and other vaccines is becoming even greater. It is very possible that a superflu or other deadly pestilence could sweep the world, killing millions!

Remember also that modern man already lives in an environment of poisons. He inhales dangerously polluted air, drinks contaminated water, and eats pesticide-laden foods. The inevitable result is that the heart, lungs and the entire body in general are *weakened*, thus lowering resistance to disease, which nearly always strikes the weakest first '

Jesus Christ told the truth bluntly, plainly, without equivocation. He said the world would experience vast disease epidemics in the end time!

Medical experts are growing increasingly alarmed when they study the world situation. They see growing signs of such epidemics. Plagues of cholera and even bubonic plague-the "black death" of the Middle Ages-could make a terrifying comeback in the near future!

Dr. Paul Ehrlich, studying the population explosion in the world today, drew a picture of what could very easily occur in the future. In one of his seemingly prophetic scenarios, he warned of the dire possibility of a vast disease pandemic taking multiple millions of lives as a new, drug-resistant strain of some major disease broke out and quickly spread around the world'

Such a possibility frightens medical authorities because it is NOT mere "science fiction." With the advent of huge jetliners and the tremendous intercontinental air and ship traffic of our age, such diseases could be spread around the world very quickly! Jesus' words, spoken more than 1,900 years ago, were certainly prophetic. The next few years will reveal precisely how much so!

EARTHQUAKES!

1. What else will happen with increasing severity? Matt. 24:7. When earthquake activity reaches peak, will men at last begin to recognize that GOD is intervening? Isa. 2:19-21.

2. Are the signs Jesus foretold only the *beginning* of sorrows? Matt. 24:8. If this prophesied time of world trouble were allowed to continue, would there be anyone left alive? Verses 21-22.

COMMENT: Famine, disease, pestilence, earthquakes and other disruptions of nature are taking an increasing toll of human life today. And as we have seen, world leaders everywhere are afraid that man's destructive capability will *annihilate all life on earth!*

THE "FOUR HORSEMEN"

1. Is the four-part "beginning of sorrows" of Matthew 24 also pictured by the first four "seals" of Revelation 6:1-8?

COMMENT: These four horses and horsemen represent the four major world conditions Jesus said would exist at the end of this age-all increasing in severity and overlapping in their effects on the entire world!

The white horse represents the increasing number of false ministers preaching a *false* Christ and *false* ways to "salvation." The red horse pictures the increasing tempo of the *ravages* of wars. The black horse-increasing *famine*. And the pale horse-rampaging *diseases*.

2. What tremendous toll of life will be taken by these "four horsemen of the Apocalypse"? Rev. 6:8.

COMMENT: Just imagine, if you can, ONE-FOURTH of mankind dying during a period described as only the BEGINNING of sorrows!

But let's not forget that man is bringing this horrible suffering and death *upon himself!* Jesus knew that man, left to his own devices, would so afflict himself and would ultimately destroy all life-unless something totally unforeseen occurred to stop it. That is why He has promised to intervene in world affairs. Jesus Christ is coming soon to rescue the world from itself because man has just about reached the *end* of his rope!

THE "ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION"

1. What was another sign Jesus gave His disciples to indicate when "the end" was near? Matt.24:14-16.

2. Did Jesus identify the "abomination of desolation" as that one which was spoken of by the prophet Daniel? Verse 15.

3. What was Daniel told about a desolating abomination? Dan. 12:1 1. Would it exist in the end time? Verses 4, 9.

COMMENT: Notice that this abomination is something that occurs in the vicinity where sacrifices are being made.

4. Where else does Daniel mention an "abomination of desolation"? Dan. 11:31.

COMMENT: Verse 31 was fulfilled in ancient history. Most Bible scholars concede that most of the eleventh chapter of Daniel was fulfilled in history by the struggles of the Seleucidae of Syria and the Ptolemies of Egypt-called the kings of the north and the south by Daniel.

Verse 31 was fulfilled when Jerusalem was conquered and the Temple of God was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, in 167 B.C. (see Rawlinson's *A Manual of Ancient History*.)

5. But didn't Jesus say an "abomination of desolation" was yet to occur in the future? Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20-24, noticing especially verse 20.

COMMENT: Putting Bible prophecy and historical fulfillment together, we can get an idea of what the abomination of desolation will be. Historically, the abomination of desolation occurred when Antiochus Epiphanes moved against Jerusalem with his army and set up an idol.

The immediate abomination of desolation to which Jesus referred was the then-coming desecration of the Temple and destruction of Jerusalem by Roman armies in A.D. 70.

The latter-day, end-time fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy will occur when invading armies are again set up against Jerusalem (Luke 21:20). These armed forces will then crush and spoil the city (verse 24), *stopping* whatever daily sacrifice may be instituted by then. These actions by the brutal occupying armies will be a great abomination for the entire city and cause the desolation thereof.

The modern "abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15), or "that maketh desolate" (Dan. 12:1 1), therefore will be vicious and catastrophic troubles caused by invading armies in Jerusalem.

SUDDEN DESTRUCTION!

1. Will there be warfare at the same time in the Middle East? Luke 21:23-24. Will the city of Jerusalem be captured? Verses 24; Zech. 14:1-2. By whom? Same verses.

COMMENT: Some have wondered if Jerusalem's destruction by the Gentile Roman armies in A.D. 70 was the fulfillment of this prophecy.

A.D. 70 was not "the END"! The presence of Roman armies in Jerusalem on A.D. 70 was only a *type* of what is to occur in the near future. The Roman legions that conquered Jerusalem then were only a type of MODERN legions that will soon again surge through the Middle East.

2. Will half of Jerusalem's population eventually be carried away and the whole city looted? Zech. 14:2. Will this time be especially hard on women? Same verse.

COMMENT: This is why Jesus warned "WOE" to pregnant and nursing women (Matt. 24:16-19). It will be very difficult for them to escape at this time!

3. Will this future military action in the Middle East threaten to engulf the whole world? Matt. 24:21-22. Will this time of "great tribulation" that ensues-this time of unequalled strife and bloodshed involving weapons of modern warfare-threaten to utterly extinguish all life on earth? Verse 22.

COMMENT: This is the very time Jesus Christ *must* intervene. Never before in human history has man been able to destroy all life on this planet. These prophecies can only refer to this latter day and the immediate future!

WORLD'S POPULATION DECIMATED

1. Does the Bible prophesy a great future war? Rev. 9:14-18. How many will die in this terrible conflict Verses 15,18.

COMMENT: Horrible as it sounds, the millions who died in World War II will be as nothing compared to the enormous decimation of human life just ahead! Roughly *one-third* of the human race will die in this war. And remember, this death toll is *in addition* to the millions of others who will die of famine and disease!

2. In summary, what does Isaiah prophesy concerning the earth's population when Christ returns? Isa. 24:1,3. Why? Verses 5-6. What is the number of the "few" people still alive compared to? Verse 13; Isa. 17:4-6.

COMMENT: In spite of the tremendous carnage that will take place before Christ returns, there still will be millions of earth's inhabitants left alive. With these as His subjects, Christ will begin His rule on earth.

"WATCH YOU THEREFORE..."

1. Will Christ's coming catch most people unawares-their minds completely occupied with their own problems, hopes, fears and pleasures-even in the midst of the most terrible times the world has ever known? Matt. 24:37-39.

2. What, therefore, is Christ's warning to us? Luke 21:34-35. What, specifically, are we to do and why? Verse 36.

COMMENT: Jesus plainly shows us that we must *watch* world events and *pray* in order to ESCAPE the trouble mankind is bringing upon itself-lest we be snared by it and therefore *unprepared* for His coming.

3. Will the events-the "signs"-preceding Christ's intervention be difficult to discern? Or will they be as obvious (to those who are *watching*) as the changing of the seasons? Compare Luke 21:29-31 with Matthew 24:32-33.

COMMENT: Are you *watching* carefully the step-by-step fulfillment of biblical prophecies on the world scene? Are you taking diligent heed to Jesus' words of warning and *praying* so you may escape? May God help you to do so!

GOD MUST INTERVENE!

When we take a hard, cold, realistic look at present world conditions and trends, they point to a fast-approaching **WORLD CRISIS** of war, starvation, uncontrollable disease epidemics, and the *extinction of human life* on this planet!

Man simply has no solutions to these terrifying problems! The further he goes, the more destructive become his efforts. His technology has gotten out of hand-beyond his capacity to control wisely.

World leaders, statesmen and scientists look at this terrifying world picture and admit they are frightened! They warn us that man's *only hope* lies in the formation of a **SUPER WORLD GOVERNMENT** wielding all authority and power over the nations.

But the nations, hostile against one another, could never form such a government.

Let's face it! Either there does exist a *living GOD* of supreme mind and total **POWER** who very soon *will* step in and intervene in the affairs of this world to **SAVE HUMANITY FROM ITSELF**-or else the **EXTINCTION** of all life will inevitably occur, sooner or later, as man unleashes the awesome forces at his control upon his neighbor!

The next lesson shows exactly how God will intervene in this world's affairs to save mankind alive.