



Royal Vision

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SPRING HOLY DAY
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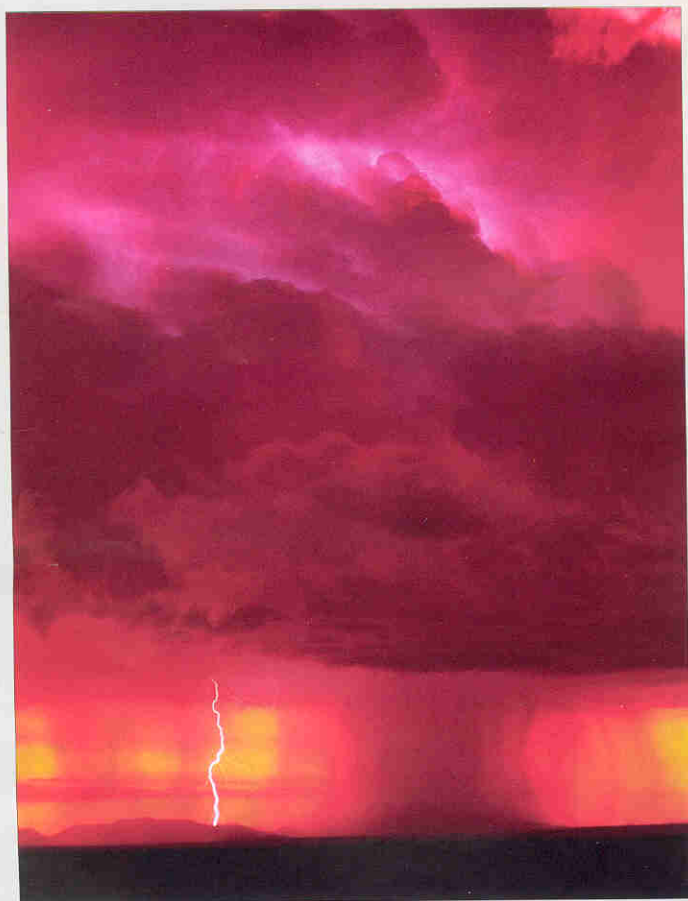
The Signs of the Times

**The Next Five Years
in Prophecy**

**Peace and Safety, Then
Sudden Destruction**

ROYAL VISION

MARCH-APRIL 2005 • VOLUME 8, NUMBER 2



About the cover A red morning sky is a sign of foul and threatening weather, but what are the signs of the times? (*Digital Stock*)

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FROM THE EDITOR

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

**Severe trials await us if we don't understand these critical signs.
God has given me a deeper understanding of this subject. Now we can fully understand.**

By Gerald Flurry

THE THREE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS DESCRIBE A SPECIFIC confrontation between Jesus Christ and the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Matthew's account reads, "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them *a sign from heaven*" (Matthew 16:1).

Christ had just fed about 4,000 people in a stunning, miraculous way. And here, of all things, these prestigious religious people were asking Him for a sign from heaven.

Clarke's Commentary says of these people, "The Sadducees had their origin and name from one Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus of Socho, president of the Sanhedrin, and teacher of the law in one of the great divinity schools in Jerusalem, about 264 years before the incarnation [Christ's first coming]." These were the highest-ranking spiritual leaders in that area, and they came, with all of their exalted thinking, tempting Christ.

Notice how Christ responded. "And he sighed deeply [or groaned] in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Mark 8:12). Christ didn't take their attitude lightly. There was something they didn't discern, and it was extremely serious. What was so troublesome about their attitude? Christ wanted to teach them, but He couldn't teach them much of anything.

Back to Matthew's version: "He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day:

for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but *can ye not discern the signs of the times?*" (Matthew 16:2-3).

Christ called them HYPOCRITES! *You're great at forecasting the weather*, He said, *but you can't discern the signs of the times!* Why was Christ so critical? And why would He be critical of us if we had this attitude?

I feel God recently has given me a much deeper understanding about the "signs of the times." I have never really grasped the depth of this subject until Christ helped me and gave me the understanding of it. **THIS IS CRITICAL FOR US TODAY, FAR MORE THAN FOR THE JEWS OF CHRIST'S DAY.**

Adulterous Thinking

Notice Christ's specific criticism of these religious leaders: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet [Jonah]. And he left them, and departed" (verse 4). Why would He talk about a "wicked and adulterous generation"?

Christ was reminding these religious people that, at one time, they were actually MARRIED TO GOD! How much did they understand about that history? The fact that they were skeptically questioning Christ showed *adulterous thinking*. That history with Christ as their Husband goes right back to the time of Abraham, Moses, Isaiah—all those men who taught about the Old Covenant.

Yet these leaders had rejected their Husband, just as their forefathers had done. Here they were trying to kill Him, and they didn't even understand what He was talking about. Some of them were in danger of losing everything, even though they didn't have God's Holy Spirit. God said, *You know who I am, and because you've been shown so much you're going to see the people of Sodom and Gomorrah come into the Kingdom of God, and you yourself cast out* (e.g. Matthew 11:23-24).

These religious leaders were spiritual adulterers! Christ condemned them about as much as a person could be condemned. They couldn't discern the signs of the times. Something really spectacular was happening right in their midst, but they didn't understand it.

These religious leaders couldn't discern the signs of the times. Something really spectacular was happening right in their midst, but they didn't understand it.

Here we are today, the affianced bride of Christ, engaged to be married to Him. Spiritual Israel has the greatest history you could imagine! So we, of all people, **MUST DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES**, and there's an important reason why.

Who Was Really Blind?

Let's look at a related incident recorded in John 9.

One Sabbath day, Christ came upon a beggar who had been blind from birth. Christ anointed his eyes with some clay and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man obeyed and was healed.

The people had known the beggar his whole life and were awed to see him with his sight restored. They brought him before the Pharisees, who asked how he was healed. The man explained to them what Jesus had done. A contention broke out among them; many thought that because the miracle occurred on the Sabbath, it couldn't be from God.

The Pharisees asked the beggar what he thought, and he said plainly that **CHRIST WAS A PROPHET!** But they couldn't accept that. They asked the man's parents about the miracle, but they were afraid to answer, knowing that speaking out against the Pharisees would get them cast out of the synagogue.

"Then again [the Pharisees] called ... the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: *we know that this man [Christ] is a sinner.* He [the beggar] answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, *I have told you already, and YE DID NOT HEAR:* wherefore would ye hear it again? *will ye also be his disciples?*" (verses 24-27). This man **STRONGLY** spoke out against the Pharisees. He was inspired by his faith and what God had done for him!

"Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is" (verses 28-29). They said, *We know Moses, and Moses taught the truth. We don't*

know about this fellow. Think about that! They were talking about the **SON OF GOD.**

"The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet **HE HATH OPENED MINE EYES**" (verse 30). This man was dumbfounded. *You are the top spiritual leaders of the land, and this man opened my eyes, and YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S FROM. That's remarkable!*

The Pharisees said they were Moses's disciples, but were they really?

Moses's Prophecy

Moses himself prophesied of Jesus Christ—and not just the powerful Christ of the Second Coming. Deuteronomy 18:15 reads, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." Two passages in the book of Acts (Acts 3:20-23; 7:37-38) repeat and expound on that prophecy.

Moses said God would raise this Prophet from *among them*. This is not the Second Coming the Jews were looking for. They were in captivity; they wanted a powerful Messiah, not the Messiah of the first coming. But that's what Moses said would happen.

The Pharisees said they were Moses's disciples and that Moses taught God's Word. They believed they kept God's Word that Moses taught. But did they really? Christ said they didn't. "Search the scriptures," He told them, "for in them ye *think ye have eternal life:* and **THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME**" (John 5:39).

We need to take that admonition personally: *Search the Scriptures.* Christ is saying that to all of the Laodiceans and all of the Philadelphians today. *Search the Scriptures, because you think you have eternal life, and in too many cases, you don't. You think you know what you're doing spiritually, and you don't.*

"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For *had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me*"—many times. "But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (verses 44-47).

Christ was telling them that they didn't understand Moses. *If you really understood Moses, you would be able to discern the signs of the times!*

In Matthew 22:24-34, the Sadducees were quoting Moses, and Christ told them, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (verse 29). That's a remarkable accusation! Then He told them that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. *I am that God, the self-existent God, the Eternal God,* He said. They'd read all about that God, but they couldn't recognize Him when He was right there among them.

Abraham's Children

These religious people also talked about Abraham all the time. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (John 8:31-33). Notice their attitude. They were absolutely certain they were free. The whole world tends to think like that—especially religious people.

"They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham" (verses 39-40). How could these people say they were the followers of Abraham while they were trying to kill the MESSIAH that Abraham prophesied would come? It's scary to consider how people can think they're so righteous and know so little!

"Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil [demon]. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?" (verses 52-53).

These are pretty strong words! Notice how Christ responded to them: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (verse 56). As the Word, the God of the Old Testament, Christ had actually been there with Abraham. And Abraham loved being with and walking with God—totally the opposite of these men who were trying to kill Christ.

"Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM" (verses 57-58). That was a shocker! It caused some of them to fall over like they were dead. They had read all about "I Am," but they didn't really know Him, did they?

How did they respond? "*Then took they up stones to cast at him:* but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (verse 59). These people were so certain about their religion! They were certain they were the children of Abraham and Moses. THEY PRACTICALLY WORSHIPED THE OLD TESTAMENT. BUT THEY DIDN'T OBEY IT!

Abraham knew all about the Messiah's first coming: so did Moses, and so did the prophets. Isaiah talked about a *child* being born (Isaiah 9:6). When did that happen? These scholars just overlooked that. They didn't want a child or a human Messiah. They wanted a God with power! And as a result, they didn't discern the signs of the times.

The Lamb of God

Notice how John the Baptist responded when he saw Jesus: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). That is reality!

These carnal Jews were looking for a sign, and He stood right there before them! Jesus Christ was, Himself, the biggest sign you could possibly imagine! Christ was the MESSIAH who would take away the sins of the world. He was to be sacrificed for all of us. Every one of those Old Testament sacrifices and offerings that the Jews knew so much about pointed to the Lamb of God, but they didn't even know who He was when He came. Some of them knew He was a teacher from God, but they wouldn't dare tell the people that.

The Lamb was a sign—the sign of signs! What more could they ask for than for the Lamb to come right there among them? He was about to sacrifice Himself for those wretched Jews and every other sinner on this Earth—and they didn't even know what was happening. Wasn't it right that Christ should have been upset? THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND *ANYTHING*—AND THOUGHT THEY UNDERSTOOD *EVERYTHING*!

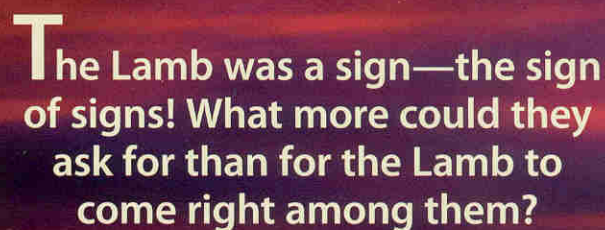
You have to be careful with an all-knowing attitude.

These Jews were given the Old Testament to preserve, yet how little of it they understood. Oh, they could talk about Moses and Abraham, but they couldn't accept the Son of God.

John the Baptist

"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" (verses 35-37). These two disciples heard John the Baptist speak; they were taught the truth by him. Who were they?

"Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One



The Lamb was a sign—the sign of signs! What more could they ask for than for the Lamb to come right among them?

of the two which heard John [the Baptist] speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother" (verses 38-40).

You can begin to see what was happening here: There was Andrew (Simon Peter's brother); the other disciple was no doubt John, who wrote the Gospel of John. They were following Christ because they had listened to the one who was preparing the way for Christ. So when Jesus Christ came on the scene, they knew precisely who He was.

Why was it so different with the Jews? The Jews didn't like John the Baptist, who happened to have the truth and who was preparing the way for Christ.

John the Baptist completed, in type, the same job Herbert W. Armstrong did in this end time. Now, what will God think if we reject what Mr. Armstrong did? A man right at the very end prepared the way for the return of Jesus Christ—and 95 percent of God's people don't even really know when Christ is going to return, and don't have an urgent message proclaiming His return to the world. It's as if they don't know anything because they didn't listen to this end-time John the Baptist! We have to discern these things—or we didn't get the message.

"He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, *We have found the Messiah*, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (verse 41). These men were so excited, saying, *We found Him! The one who was prophesied by Moses and Abraham and all the prophets!*

They had been prepared by John the Baptist, as we were prepared by Mr. Armstrong. Now we must find the Messiah. Where is He? Where is His work today, preparing for His Second Coming?

This is part of how John prepared the way for Jesus Christ: by instructing these men. Mr. Armstrong also prepared the way for Christ (and we are a part of the process because we continue his message) by PREPARING US!

And still, 95 percent of GOD'S PEOPLE CANNOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES! They don't know where the Messiah's work is! They don't know, or they're rebelling against it. Where is the work Mr. Armstrong prepared us for?

IF WE UNDERSTAND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES, WE ARE GOING TO BE PASSIONATELY EXCITED ABOUT PUBLICIZING CHRIST'S MESSAGE! We must be, because we know He's coming, and our job is to tell the world! That's why we're here! Do you UNDERSTAND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES?

The Disciples Followed Christ

Notice how the men who became Christ's disciples responded to Him. What a contrast to those hard-headed Jewish leaders.

Verse 42: "And [Andrew] brought [Simon Peter] to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation,

If we understand the signs of the times, we are going to be passionately excited about publicizing Christ's message!

A stone"—or, more accurately, a *pebble*. Christ is the Stone; Peter is the pebble.

"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter" (verses 43-44). So they had been taught by John too, no doubt.

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, *We have found him*, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (verse 45). Look at the difference! *We found the Messiah!* these men said. *We found the one Moses and the prophets talked about!* He's alive, right here, right now! They were thrilled! They were ecstatic to be able to be a part of that.

NOTHING SO GREAT HAD EVER HAPPENED IN HUMAN HISTORY! But it didn't impress the Jews. It never impresses carnality. Here was the most epoch-making event in history to that point, and the Jews were going up to Christ and asking, *Well, could you give us a sign from heaven?* Christ was upset, and He should have been.

The Old Testament is full of prophecies about that event, but the Jews didn't know what it was about. You see, it really gets back to *how well we know our Bibles*. You'd better know, and if you don't, you can't make excuses to Christ when He returns, because He won't accept them. If we don't know where we are in this end time of man, we are of all people most pathetic. We've been given everything.

Look how excited these men were, and ask yourself if you are that excited today!

"Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (verse 49). Here was the only Son of God, who came down from heaven to be the Lamb and to be sacrificed for the sin of the world. No wonder Nathaniel was excited! He said, *You're the Son of God! You came down from God! You're the King of Israel!*

The *International Critical Commentary* explains, "On this first day of His teaching, Christ is recognized by those who have been already prepared to receive Him. The disciples of John [the Baptist] are shown in their true position toward Him and His successor."

When you are tuned in to the times, you are aware of everything that's happening AS IT HAPPENS! That is a truly wonderful thing.

The Voice

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (verse 18). Jesus Christ came to declare God the Father. Of course, the Jews didn't know that. Christianity today doesn't know that. Nobody but this Church knows that, so they don't discern the signs of the times.

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?" (verse 19). This almost gets comical after a while: To everyone God sent, these leaders asked, *Well, who are you? Give us a sign and show us who you are.* They were amazingly good at forecasting the weather, but they couldn't discern the signs of the times. They didn't know who this man was that Christ prophesied He would send to prepare the way for His coming!

These were the spiritual giants of Judah, and they were asking all of these stupid questions! You didn't see the disciples asking those questions: They were *telling* Christ and John WHO THEY WERE—with all the excitement they could possibly muster!

John responded to their questions: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet [Isaiah]" (verse 23). He told them directly that he was fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3. He was a type of Elijah.

"And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor [Elijah], neither that prophet?" (John 1:24-25). These leaders didn't know why John was there, who he was, why he was baptizing. They were looking for an end-time Christ and they knew that the Elijah and a prophet came just before that.

What is interesting is that they were talking about three personalities in verses 24-25, and there are also three personalities in Isaiah 40: John the Baptist, Mr. Armstrong, and this work in the end time, which says to the cities of Judah and to the world, "Behold your God!" (Request our booklet *That Prophet* for more explanation of this passage.) The Jews were discussing John the Baptist, Elijah and that prophet—and if you go to Isaiah 40 you see the same three personalities.

This is exciting and marvelous truth because it is discussing our work right now, just before the Second Coming of the Messiah. We are tied into the first-century John and the end-time John. We are doing the Elijah work. We are preparing for the return of Jesus Christ as we teach what Mr. Armstrong taught us. John is specifically, even in this context, TALKING ABOUT YOU, because there wouldn't be a prophet getting that message out if there weren't some dedicated people behind that message, helping to disseminate it! He's talking about God's little group of people who are dedicated to this work. That's the only way to spread the message. That's the only way anybody would know about the signs of the times, because we're the only ones who know, and it's our job to make the world know.

What an honor to be a part of this work that is talked about here and to discern just what is happening in this world! Your offerings do everything to fulfill these prophecies. We are getting a message out. The people in this world are in total darkness regarding the times they live in, but Christ keeps trying to teach them; to show them about the mystery and remove the mystery from the Bible. He wants people to know that He's about to

return; and, that they will be resurrected and given a chance to know God and have the mystery solved.

The Word who was with God came down to Earth—to all humanity. The Messiah was standing there talking to the Jews and said, “Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern THIS TIME?” (Luke 12:56). That was the big question. And here we are in the last hour. Do we really discern it? You can’t fake this. We’re going to discern these times, or we’re going to be left behind. The Jews were left behind, and just look at history to see the horrific things that happened to them. This world has never seen such atrocities since then—and won’t until probably the coming decade.

Christ was saying, *Can’t you see from the writings of Moses and the prophets? Can’t you see that this is the time of the Messiah’s first coming, and I am the one?* You can sense Christ’s frustration with these hardheaded people. They wanted more miracles, while the miracles were all around them! Miracles never will mean anything to the carnal mind.

PHYSICAL SIGNS DON’T ENABLE YOU TO DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES! LETTING GOD’S WORD ABIDE IN YOU—THAT WILL CAUSE YOU TO DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

The Jews went around preaching all the time about the manna they received in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ came and said in John 6, *I AM THE MANNA! ISRAEL IS DEAD! I AM THE MANNA THAT WILL GIVE YOU ETERNAL LIFE!* Still, they didn’t get it. They ought to have been electrified!

What a sad, sad chapter in their history. Yet so many people today are making the same mistakes.

The Last Chance

Something about Matthew 16:4 was puzzling to me, but I believe Christ showed me exactly what He was talking about. “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet [Jonah]. And he left them, and departed.”

I believe what Christ was saying is, *Look, I’m going to be resurrected out of the belly of the Earth, and that’s the only sign you’re ever going to get.* In other words, *It’s too late for you physically. You’re not going to get what I’m talking about here, but one day—if you’re in that resurrection to physical life—you’ll understand about me being resurrected out of the Earth and realize that you have to come to me to be saved! This time around, you don’t even understand as much as Sodom and Gomorrah, or the Queen of the South!*

Fifty percent of God’s people in this end time cannot discern the signs of the times and won’t repent of that, and they have to die forever! As Christ said, you may think you have eternal life, but you’d better examine that closely. You’d better discern exactly what’s happening in this Church today. He says the same to most of our people. I would imagine it must be getting close to too late for most of the Laodiceans—and for half of them, eternally too late.

Notice the last sentence in Matthew 16:4: “And he left them, and departed.” *Lange’s Commentary* says that “this abrupt termination indicates that he JUDICIOUSLY GAVE THEM UP.” *I can’t do anything for you people. You’re not listening to me; you’re not repenting.*

Lange’s also says, “He departed; but they are still standing and waiting for the sign from heaven.” Christ refused to give them a sign—it wouldn’t have done them any good anyhow. He left them for the resurrection, hoping that they would get it at that time.

We are held accountable for what we receive. We must be able to discern the times. *YOU, INDIVIDUALLY*, will have to understand.

The End-Time Elijah

I want to bring this down to recent times.

Mr. Armstrong was a towering figure in this end time. Malachi 3:1 talks about him being the messenger preparing the way. Malachi 4:5-6 discuss Elijah coming before the great and dreadful Day of the Lord. Matthew 17:10-11 talk about Elijah coming and restoring ALL THINGS pertaining to the doctrines of the Church. Revelation 3:7-8 also talk about Mr. Armstrong

Physical signs don’t enable you to discern the signs of the times! Letting God’s Word abide in you—that will cause you to discern the signs of the times.

and the Philadelphia era of the Church. Zechariah 4:8 and 10 say that he finished the work of the Philadelphia era, as does Matthew 24:14. Mr. Armstrong preached the gospel around the world for the first time since A.D. 69—in nearly 2,000 years!

One of our ministers, before coming into the Philadelphia Church of God, had a leading Worldwide Church of God evangelist over to his home. They were talking about the changes in the Church after Mr. Armstrong’s death. The subject of Elijah came up, and our minister said he believed Mr. Armstrong was the end-time Elijah.

Shockingly, the WCG evangelist disagreed.

What is that admission really saying? Mr. Armstrong restored ALL THINGS, and this man is acting like one of the Jews confronting Christ—yet, in some ways, FAR WORSE. This man doesn’t believe Mr. Armstrong fulfilled that prophetic office, and yet anybody with elementary common sense—spiritually—can prove he restored ALL THINGS! That is like asking someone who just came out of a movie theater, “How did you like the movie?” and having them respond, “What movie?”

That evangelist missed everything! He did not understand the signs of the times. He didn’t know what Christ was doing! That’s drastically tragic—blindness of the highest order. You have to ask, *Well, what were you doing in God’s Church? What was the point?*

Look at the work Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did through Mr. Armstrong! Look at how Mr. Armstrong prepared for the return of Jesus Christ! Yet this man says, *I don’t believe he was the man.* He didn’t comprehend the signs of the times. It’s LIKE HE MISSED THE SIXTH ERA OF GOD’S CHURCH! How could he miss the sixth era and possibly understand anything about the seventh?

This evangelist wrote in January 1979 about how Garner Ted Armstrong and other evangelists forbade him to talk to Mr. Armstrong and reveal their plans for changing the doctrines of the Church. He said that they threatened his job if he went around them. He was privy to a MASSIVE BETRAYAL IN THE CHURCH!

What did he do about it? He didn’t do anything at all. He congratulated himself for not going along with them, but is that

the Bible's approach? If people are putting Mr. Armstrong down, is it right to sit there and take it? To just watch such a monstrous betrayal happen before your eyes? The fact that he didn't respond much more radically was an indication that something bad was going to happen in his life. If he had discerned the signs of the times he wouldn't have put up with that. There was only ONE MAN ON THE PLANET who could have stopped that nightmare, and nobody consulted him!

EACH ONE OF US IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT GOES ON IN THE CHURCH. You can't just sit there and watch the Church collapse and say, *Well, I didn't go along with it.* That's not really doing anything! Of course we have to be very careful how we approach anything like this, but you can't just let the Church

Each one of us is responsible for what goes on in the Church. You can't just sit there and watch the Church collapse. That's really failing to discern the signs of the times!

fall apart! That's really FAILING TO DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES! THAT'S FAILING TO REALIZE THAT ETERNAL LIVES ARE AT STAKE!

Can you discern the signs of the times—especially “THIS TIME,” as Christ said? THIS TIME, just before His Second Coming? The prophecies are being fulfilled before our eyes! In the same context as the prophecy of the gospel being preached around the world, the Bible talks about EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD BEING WIPED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH! Do you discern the signs of the times? Do you know that we're living in those times? THIS TIME, NOW? It's about to explode in our faces! Do you believe that? That's what “discerning the signs of the times” means.

Labor in Study

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31).

God wants us to have REAL LIFE! He wants us to be able to discern when He's doing a work. He wants us to BELIEVE IT and KNOW IT and SUPPORT IT with everything we possibly can. That's how we get the job done! But we have to believe in these scriptures.

John said this is written that we might BELIEVE—not just read it and say, *Well, I've got my Bible study in.* That's a real trap we can get into. Even in song services on the Sabbath, sometimes I'll catch myself just singing the songs without thinking about the words. So I'll concentrate on what I'm singing, and I get so much more out of it. We can do the same thing with our Bible study. *I've got my Bible study time in.* Okay—but WHAT DID YOU GET OUT OF IT? Did you really get it? Because THIS IS ALL WRITTEN THAT WE MIGHT REALLY BELIEVE!

Mr. Armstrong discerned the signs of all the times. When he was first called to the truth, he labored for six months in

intensive Bible study. We do need to LABOR to learn the truth. It's hard work! But you need to work to get it into your mind so you can discern the signs of the times.

Mr. Armstrong read in the Bible where Christ said He would build His Church. He began to look around for the Church. He found some people with the truth, but it was the Sardis era and the Church was dead! They knew their government was wrong and it wasn't working, so they were trying to reorganize the government. Here's what happened at that meeting:

Lesson 53 of the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course* commented, “Prior to the meeting, a call for prayer had been sent to God's people around the world, ‘that God would again choose men to lead His Church, as in the former time.’ God answered that prayer! But NOT in the way they expected!

“As the hands of the clock neared high noon on that fateful Sabbath day, the drawing of names for the ‘70 elders’ reached number 40. The 40th name was ‘Elder Herbert Armstrong of Oregon’ (*Bible Advocate*, Nov. 6, 1933).

“No one knew it then, least of all Mr. Armstrong, who was not present at the meeting, but *Jesus Christ had made His choice*—with the number 40—of a man to REVIVE His work in the end time. Forty signifies the completion of testing. Now the time of trial and test for the Sardis Church had run out. And as with ancient Belshazzar, the Sardis era of God's Church had been ‘weighed in the balance and found wanting’ (Daniel 5:27).”

Then the correspondence course quoted Revelation 3:3: “Remember therefore how thou [the Sardis Church] hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

God sent Mr. Armstrong to warn the Sardis people and prepare them so they would repent, but they couldn't understand the signs of the times. They didn't believe Mr. Armstrong could be the man God would be working with. *He wouldn't work with a guy like that! He'd work with somebody here at the very top of the Church structure,* they must have reasoned.

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (verses 5-6). Hear what the Spirit says—in other words, read the signs of the times.

Are you discerning the signs of the times? Are you really LABORING to watch? That is where Sardis broke down! It didn't know anything about Christ's Second Coming! As Christ would ask, *Can't you discern at this time what's happening?*

In A.D. 69, when it stopped preaching the gospel to the world, God's Church went to sleep. It slumbered and slept for hundreds and hundreds of years—until a voice went out over radio in 1934. Using a man, Jesus Christ was getting prepared for His Second Coming!

We are entering into a new, dark age—darker than any age this world has ever known. The worst suffering ever is just ahead of us. We must LABOR in our study of the Bible; we must STRIVE AND STRAIN in our spiritual lives and GET TO KNOW EVERYTHING WE CAN ABOUT THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES! We ought to know all about the Church split and what it means. We need to understand what we mean when we talk about the end, and then the last end, and the last hour. We must be tuned in to these developments step by step by step, like we're following the ticking of the clock!

If we understand the signs of the times, we know that Jesus Christ is about to return! And we're going to share His throne forever!



The Next Five Years in Prophecy

■ **The countdown to
the return of Jesus Christ!**

Special Report from the *Trumpet* Staff

WHEN OUR FLAGSHIP MAGAZINE—the *Philadelphia Trumpet*—began 15 years ago this February, the world had just experienced a metaphoric earthquake that sent political tsunamis around the globe: The

Berlin Wall fell. Exactly 28 days later, the Philadelphia Church of God came into being. Two months later, the *Trumpet* began declaring that from that moment forward the world would never be the same. This watershed event marked not only a new geopolitical reality, but also a new prophetic era.

For 15 years, the *Trumpet* has been monitoring world events in light of prophetic understanding. For 15 years, it has seen the

pace of world events accelerate in mind-splitting fashion. It has charted dramatic headline after dramatic headline—often in *advance* of the event. We have watched globe-altering events not only intensify, but accelerate in frequency.

Based on these trends and how all these events have tied in to Bible prophecy, we have strong reason to believe that the next FIVE YEARS will be even *more* dramatic than the previous 15 combined.

The unprecedented disaster wrought by the tsunami that affected 12 Asian nations is only a small taste of what is coming. Events will be born of this next half decade that will surely affect every man, woman and child on this planet! Here's how.

Global Forecast

Just a brief look at the global calendar tells us we're in for some major changes on the world scene. Significant leadership transfers will happen in major countries around the world. This year, in Iran, it's likely a political leader will be elected who marches more in step with the beat of the Ayatollah's dumbek. In the next couple of years, Britain, Germany and France will all hold elections—likely spelling the end of Gerhard Schröder and Jacques Chirac as their nations' leaders. The European Union's far-right parties are already planning a coalition to present a unified front at the 2009 parliamentary elections.

Other leadership changes may occur—the pope will not likely live five more years. Within that time, Prince Charles may even feel the weight of the British crown.

In the next three to five years, the EU hopes to expand further. More nations will adopt the euro as their main currency. The constitution issue—whether or not all nations ratify it, especially the UK—will be resolved.

As the United States continues to decline in global popularity, nations shunned by the world not so long ago will become the darlings of global news media: Beijing will host the 2008 Summer Olympics and Berlin the 2009 International Association of Athletic Federations World Championships. If all goes well, Russia will be flying high in 2009 with its mission to Mars.

Europe's technology sector will continue to gain the edge over American interests. By 2008, Europe plans to launch its first four Galileo satellites.

In trade, the U.S. will continually find itself on the sidelines of huge deals among forming blocs. Trans-Atlantic trade ten-

sions are sure to heat up, while European-African, European-Latin American and Sino-Russian trade will only improve. Trade between Iran and Asian nations will also flourish—with energy exports from Iran to Asia in exchange for arms—as has been the case historically.

Within Asia, trade relations will be sunnier than ever, with the world's largest free-trade agreement (in terms of population) in effect by 2010 between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Russia's East Siberian oil pipeline will be transporting increasing amounts of oil to East Asia.

Though some of the specifics are hypothetical, the general trajectory of these events is sure—as God's Word tells us. What's more, this scenario could easily transpire within five years—triggering events that will lead to the greatest news on this Earth!

Analyzing the Forecast

All these events require nothing more than seeing what's ahead and projecting possible outcomes based on historical and current trends. But we've not accounted for the uncertain, volatile nature of our world.

As Arnaud de Borchgrave stated in the Dec. 15, 2004, *Washington Times*: "The world can now count on one geopolitical earthquake every 10 years. Between 1985 and 1995, it was the fall of the Berlin Wall, the implosion of the Soviet Union, the collapse of communist parties the world over, and America's emergence as the world's only superpower. Between 1995 and 2005, it was the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.... So between 2005 and 2015, what's on the global menu?"

De Borchgrave gives both an optimistic scenario involving Iran's leadership in brokering peace in the Middle East by ceasing its support of terrorism, and a pessimistic scenario involving domino-dropping events following a nuclear terrorist attack. His latter scenario is certainly the more realistic.

Here we offer a similar scenario of what the world may look like within five years—based on the changes in leadership mentioned above, historical trends, and certain outcomes revealed in God's Word that this Church has been trumpeting these past 15 years.

What we offer here is something no major news editor or analyst could offer. Not because our writers are more talented or more perceptive of global trends than

the great minds of this world. None would claim to be so. But because we go to that "more sure word of prophecy," as the Apostle Peter called it. There is a God in heaven, as the Prophet Daniel said, who has revealed the outcome of world events in alarming detail! Details that are *close to being fulfilled*! It is to this God and His Word that we look for our analysis, which has proven unerring time and time again over the past 15 years. It is in view of the reliability of our track record that we urge you to take note of the scenario offered below. Though some of the specifics are hypothetical, the general trajectory of these events is *SURE*—as God's Word tells us. What's more, this scenario could easily transpire within five years—triggering events that will lead to the greatest news on this Earth!

Frightening Scenario

First, imagine the global political landscape of the next five years as follows:

As expected, a majority of Britons, in a referendum, vote against the EU constitution.

The EU constitution has enjoyed certain success by being ratified by most nations. But with the UK (and perhaps some smaller EU states) failing to ratify it, the constitution's future suddenly looks grim (according to the constitution, it is void if not ratified by all 25 EU nations). Unless something is done, multiple months of work by EU framers will have been eradicated in a matter of moments. Crafty Eurocrats, in true form, work to find a way to bend the rules. And for the first time, it looks as if Britain's days as an EU member are numbered.

When the pope dies, a radical, even more politically active pontiff takes the helm of the Vatican—perhaps Josef Ratzinger. What better person to unite Europeans under the call to embrace their Catholic roots? But he doesn't need to do much. Fond memories of John Paul II and the escalation of xenophobia (particularly against Muslims) sway religious sentiment on the Continent. Europeans clamor for a revised constitution to include a reference to Christianity, and the Vatican quietly watches as all goes according to its plan.

This time, as EU constitution framers work to revise the treaty, they are wary to let Britain, with its Euroskeptic populace, have a part in voting on the new constitution. Eventually, Britain is forced to *leave* the Union—pressured by the EU's disgruntled leadership and its own citizens.

Meanwhile, increasing unemployment and social unrest in Germany have spelled the end for Schröder's ruling party, bringing the Christian Democrats into the limelight and Bavarian Premier Edmund Stoiber into the chancellorship.

In 2008, the U.S. elects a soft-liner into office. With a depleted military and political will resulting from the Iraqi occupation, the president-elect promises to focus on issues most pressing at home.

Then comes 2009.

In European elections, a far-right coalition gains a decisive majority in the European Parliament. Individual nations, following Germany's example, clamor for far-right governments with strong anti-immigration stances—putting parties into power that promise to solve the socialist-engendered economic woes that have plagued Europe for years.

In Iran—where the pro-Western movement has been all but squashed—citizens elect a president, someone like Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who streamlines the political and religious arms of the government and makes the Islamic Republic an even greater power in the Middle East.

With the demise of Hosni Mubarak, the moderate Islamic government of Egypt is overthrown. A radical new government—reminiscent of Iran's 1979 revolution—causes Egypt to align itself with the leadership in Tehran.

Iran's dominance in the Middle East is now especially worrying, as U.S. troops have pulled completely out of Iraq and left a Shiite-led "democracy" in place. The Shiite government is strongly allied with the new Iran—giving Tehran control over most all Middle Eastern oil (the Shiites control most of the oil in Saudi Arabia as well). This virtual monopoly allows Iran to increase the price of oil and deal a decisive wound to the ailing dollar.

Europe, though increasingly apprehensive about Iran's growing hegemony, forms a temporary alliance with Iran and China. Joining together to form a blockade against the U.S. are Iran (with its near-monopoly on Middle East oil) and China (with its monopoly on the world's major sea gates). America is increasingly weakened as these nations cut off its resources. Latin American and African nations also ignore and even work against the U.S. as they strike deals with this triumvirate.

But Europe is wary of the alliance it has formed with Iran. The EU has also begun to feel a reaction from Iran to its xenophobic policies slated to control Islamic extremism. The EU feels it is being pushed into a corner by Iran's restrictive

oil policies and the nuclear threat posed from the south by the volatile Persian nation and its Arabian lackeys. It therefore turns its attention to another energy source—Russia. Seeking to hedge its bets in case of loss of supply from volatile Middle East sources, Germany has cleverly maximized investment in Russia's energy sector. Mutual interest revives a form of the old Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, enabling a German-dominated United States of Europe to continue dramatic industrial and military development to superpower status.

America's new president, in his/her first year in office, begins a policy of rapprochement and appeasement with other nations—particularly Europe, and especially Germany. Trying to "right the wrongs" of the previous administration, the president seeks to undo the epidemic levels of anti-Americanism the world over. In this pursuit, the U.S. abandons Israel.

The shuffle of the military continues; America no longer has a dominant presence in Europe or Asia. The numbers of troops in the new bases in Eastern Europe and the Middle East are drastically reduced.

Suddenly, a handful of organized radicals, sensing a once-again gun-shy America, detonate a crude nuclear device in a major American city. The death count is in the hundreds of thousands.

The economy takes an immediate hit: Consumer spending all but screeches to a halt because of new fears. The stock market crashes, and the housing bubble bursts as real-estate values plummet. Asian banks remove their support of the already unstable U.S. dollar—and a debilitating foreign-capital flight ensues. The dollar subsequently is no longer the world's reserve currency. Energy resources are now exchanged in euros.

The fall of the dollar triggers a massive, political jolt in Europe. Given the political instability in Europe induced by failure to effectively unite its international mix of iron and miry clay—and now intensified by the fallen dollar—the EU realizes its governments must become more streamlined. The European Com-

mission, having earlier considered cutting its members from 25 (one per nation) to 15, decides on a 10-member commission. The European Commission, largely unaccountable to European citizens, had always been a quasi-oligarchy. Now, with commissioners not even representing each nation in the Union (some nations virtually enslaved by the empire), they are like a team of "monarchs." Thus, as prophesied millennia ago by Almighty God, Europe finds itself in the grip of 10 "kings"—who will eventually give their power over to a state religion—formulating the final resurrection of the "Holy" Roman Empire.

On the U.S. domestic front, new fears give way to racial tension and prejudice: first against Arabs, Persians and Muslims in general; then toward immigrants such as the Hispanic population; then aimed at different races—particularly African Americans. Ethnic minorities retaliate, and race riots kill thousands more nationwide.

Xenophobia and race riots spread throughout other Anglicized nations: Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand.

The new instability of the U.S. and its economy sends shock waves around the globe. The geopolitics of the East transform when Asia awakens to the reality of nuclear terrorism on U.S. soil. Taiwan, Japan and South Korea no longer have the security blanket that America once provided. South Korea bows to Chinese regional influence. Taiwan has no choice but to accept Beijing's claims that Taiwan is part of "one China." Japan dispenses with its U.S.-written pacifist constitution and arms itself to the teeth—justifying its acquirement of nuclear weapons by pointing to the attack on the U.S.

China, still plagued by Muslim terrorist violence, is ever more concerned about terrorist threats in its western provinces. It steps up cooperation with Russia (plagued by Chechnya) and India (still wrestling with Pakistani insurgents over the Kashmir province). All three, on high alert, take even more radical steps against Islamic elements (for China, some reminiscent of Tiananmen). The level of arms buildup reaches fever pitch.

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Emboldened by the attack on the “Great Satan,” Iran’s leadership rallies Islam against Israel. With the support of Tehran, the Palestinians gain control of East Jerusalem. The “peace process” is pronounced dead, dramatically fulfilling the biblical forecast that the “ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly” (Isaiah 33:7).

Washington is no help to Israel now. Israel turns to Britain, which in turn tries to use its former status as part of the EU to bring Germany to the rescue.

Germany—which has a vested interest in the Middle East—hears Israel’s case, even though for years it supported the Palestinian cause. Islam has gone too far, Berlin believes. Iran—once a strategic partner in marginalizing the U.S.—is now too powerful, too cocky.

European “peacekeeping” forces roll into Israel—surrounding a city in turmoil.

Europe seeks to deal with Iranian domination of the Middle East and the rise of terrorism once and for all. The U.S. did not win the war against terror, and it’s up to Europe to finish the job. With the blessing of internally weakened America, Britain and Israel, a battle ensues that marks the beginning of World War III.

Outrageous? Unbelievable?

Within five years, all this could easily happen. But how likely is it? Does it seem utterly unbelievable?

As, stated, certain *details* of this scenario are largely hypothetical. But much of it is **PROPHETIC CERTAINTY!** Here’s what we can be sure of, based on the Bible:

We have long contended that Britain ultimately will not be a part of a united Europe, since the Bible prophesies it will be the *victim* of European aggression. The Bible speaks of Assyria—end-time Germany—as God’s tool to punish modern Israel (Isaiah 10:5), which includes the British peoples. Britain will either leave (at its citizens’ behest) or be forced out of the Union.

We also know, according to Bible prophecy, that a strongman will come on the scene to dominate a German-led Europe (Daniel 8:23). Whether that man

is Edmund Stoiber—currently awaiting a crack at the German chancellorship in the 2006 elections—is only speculation. But we know a man like this will come on the scene—as well as a strong religious figure, perhaps someone like Josef Ratzinger. Revelation 13 speaks of two beasts—one political, the other religious—both components of the final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire. Herbert Armstrong’s

eye-opening free booklet *Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?* explains how Revelation

13 shows two sides of a formidable global power—one, the political side; the other, the religious side. The second beast is a powerful religion that will be at the helm of the first beast! (verses 12, 15). Other scriptures note a woman (biblical imagery for a church) riding this beast (as our literature explains).

Both will be led by terrifyingly charismatic leaders—men alive and working behind the scenes right now to fulfill this prophetic destiny!

Greater chaos could be awaiting the EU that could bring this strong political leader to the fore. Bible prophecy indicates that it will be someone from Germany, as Germany is a main player in these end-time prophecies. This man may or may not be elected into the German chancellorship, but somehow will eventually gain leadership of the EU through power and devious diplomacy (Daniel 11:21-34—explained in our Daniel booklet).

Chaos in Europe would also open the way for the new pope to get more involved in European politics (Revelation 17). We also know that United Europe, at its zenith of power, will be led by “ten kings” (Revelation 17:12 and other prophecies)—implying either that its members are dropped to 10 nations, or that the nations solidify into 10 groups of nations, or that its leadership is consolidated into 10 ruling representatives—perhaps actual monarchs, or merely 10 figurative ones. (More on Europe’s future is given in our booklet *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*.)

As far as America’s future, of this we are sure: The U.S. will not have the political will or the military might to remain a

superpower. It is destined to be torn apart by terrorism and race riots—incredible as it may sound, causing the death of **MILLIONS** (request *Ezekiel the End-Time Prophet* for more on this).

The U.S. will probably form some type of an alliance with Germany—as the prophecies of Ezekiel indicate the Germans are its “lovers” politically. (However, they have been America’s *lovers* in a general sense for many years.) This will set the scene for the prophesied German betrayal of modern Israel (Ezekiel 23).

We know that Israel and Britain will go to Germany when the peace process begins to unravel. The Bible also prophesies specifically about the fall of **HALF** of Jerusalem to the Palestinians. Our free booklet *Jerusalem in Prophecy* explains these prophecies from Hosea 5:13 and Zechariah 14:1-2.

As our *King of the South* booklet explains, we know Europe is bound to clash with a nation that has attained Middle East supremacy.

We may confidently predict that Asia will unite to meet the coming threats to this world. Our *Russia and China in Prophecy* booklet explains these particulars.

Most alarmingly, the Bible talks about European armies rolling into Jerusalem—surrounding that great city. That is a watershed geopolitical event that God calls the “abomination of desolation” (Luke 21:20; see also Matthew 24:15). And what an abomination it will cause! But, even far more exciting and *positive*, is that God reveals this abomination begins a **COUNTDOWN** to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! Daniel 12:11 says that when the abomination of desolation is set up, the days of man’s rule on Earth will be numbered—only 1,290 more days from that point.

Is it outrageous to think we could be only five years away from when armies will surround the “city of peace”? To think that in a few years, the countdown to Jesus Christ’s return will begin? Facts indicate that prophecies leading up to this event are being fulfilled at an alarming rate.

Watch for these prophesied events *soon* to overtake this world. Jesus Christ said that when we see those armies surround Jerusalem, this is the time to flee (Matthew 24:15-16; Luke 21:21). What wonderful news! God will protect those who **BELIEVE** and trust in *Him!* What hope to know that we can come under the protective hand of our Almighty Creator. As He promises in Psalms 91:7, “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.” ❖

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