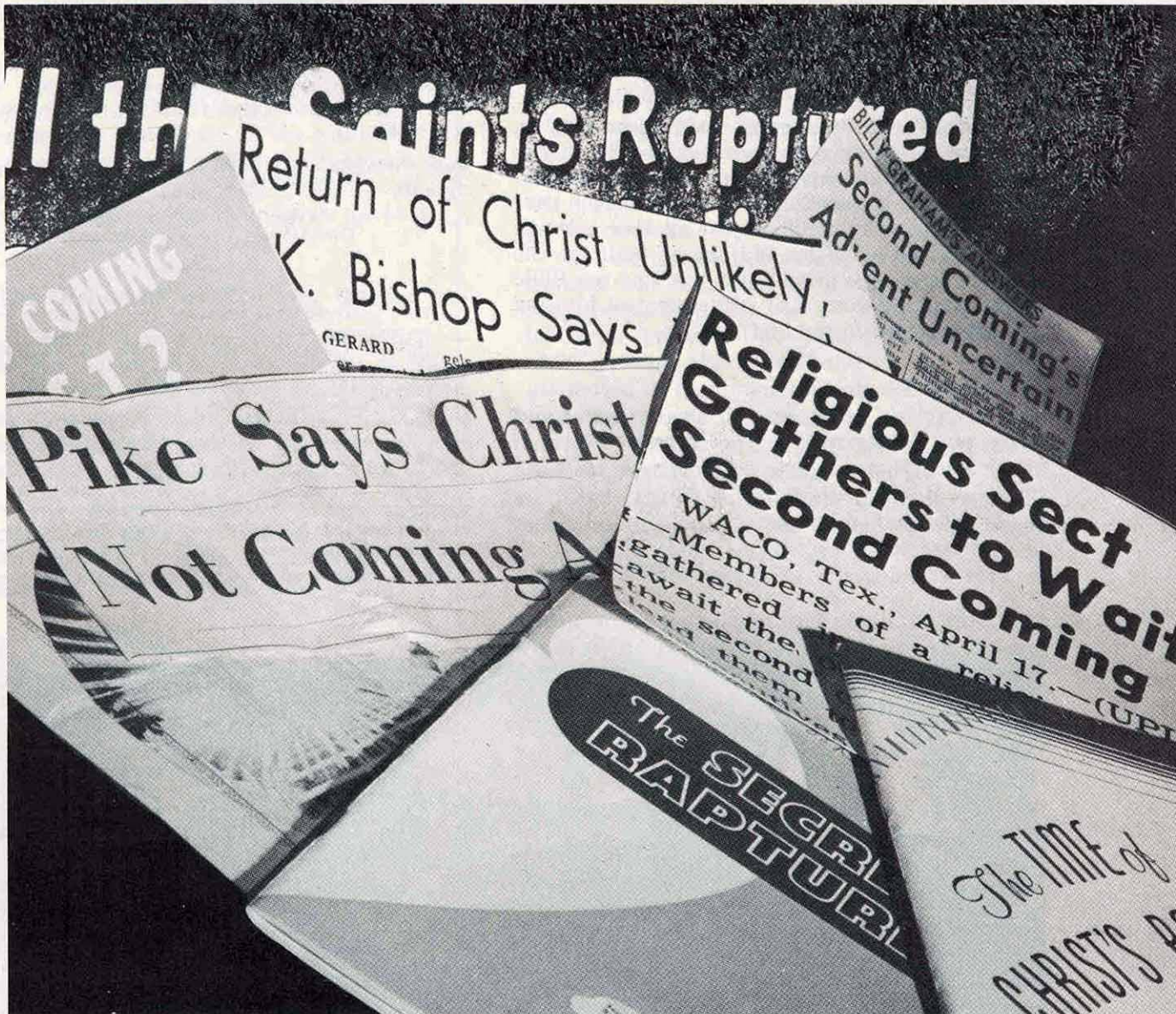




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Ambassador College CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON 3

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About Our Cover . . .

A plethora of articles, booklets and tracts proclaiming various elaborate theories about the second coming of Christ stream forth from religious publishing houses every day. Periodically, certain religious groups will gather on mountaintops, in caves or in deserts to await "Christ's return," much to the amusement of others. Yet many others are pessimistic in their views — some even *denying* that Christ will ever return.

What is the *truth*? Does the Bible really teach that Christ will return to the earth? If so, can we know where or when or *how* He will come? This important lesson reveals the answers!

Ambassador College Photo

THE *DRAMATIC* RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST!

When and where will Christ return? Will He come quietly, or will the whole world know? Has He already returned secretly? Here is the amazing truth about the **SECOND COMING of Jesus Christ!**

NO NEWS STORY could be more shocking. No headline could be more spectacular than: **JESUS CHRIST RETURNS!**

... or more *ridiculed* today.

To the average person, the idea of Jesus Christ returning to earth is a fantastic fable that has no bearing whatsoever on the realities of life.

Yet millions of professing Christians still expect the second coming of Christ — though widely divided among themselves as to *why*, *when* and *how* He will appear.

The Promise of Christ's Return

Just before His death and resurrection — before His departure from the Mount of Olives over 1900 years ago — Jesus Christ promised, "I will come *again*" (John 14:3).

And only moments after His ascension, the apostles were startled by the appearance of two

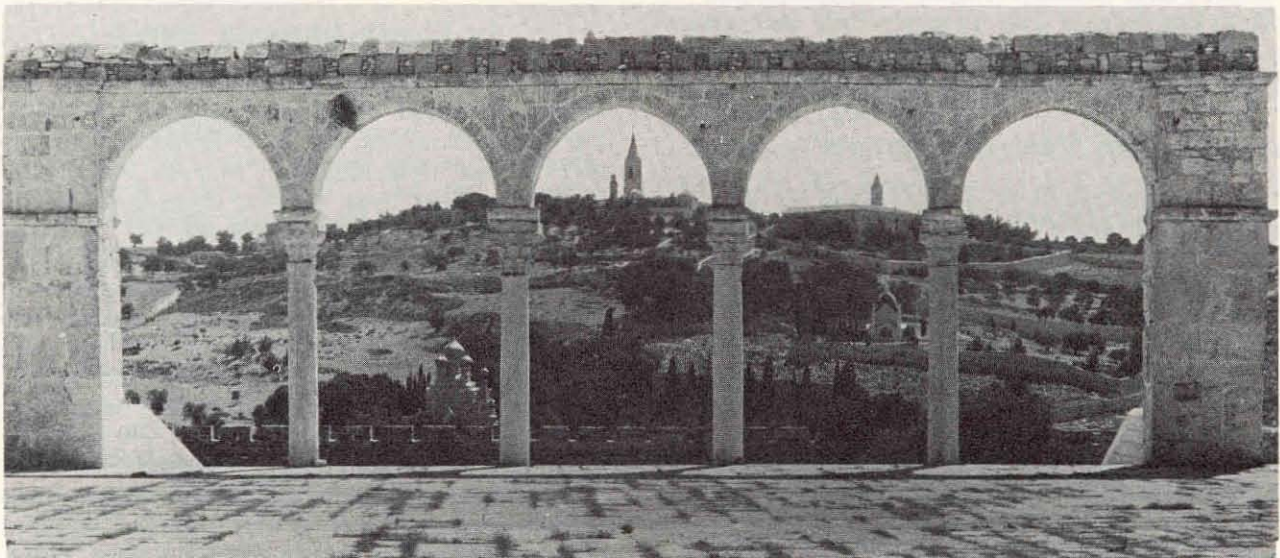
divine messengers who assured them: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come in like manner* as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). They confirmed Jesus' *promise* that He would come again and told the *manner* of His return.

The early New Testament Church believed what Jesus said, and taught His message to others. Notice what Edward Gibbon said about the early church in his famous history, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

"The ancient and popular doctrine of the *Millennium* was *intimately connected with the second coming of Christ*. As the works of creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed at six thousand years. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labor and contention, which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful *Sabbath* of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived,

MOUNT OF OLIVES — Ancient arch of the temple platform in Jerusalem frames the Mount of Olives, site of Christ's prophesied return.

P. Termes Photo



would *reign upon earth* till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection" (Gibbon, vol. II, p. 546, 1899 edition, emphasis ours throughout lesson).

But that truth was gradually *rejected!*

Gibbon goes on to show that the fact Jesus would come a second time to intervene in world affairs came to be regarded as an error. Within a century and a half after Christ's ascension, it was treated as a profound allegory — not to be taken literally. The doctrine that Christ would return to *rule the earth* "was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism" (*ibid.*, p. 547).

The world today continues to ridicule the idea of Christ's return. Nevertheless, this message lies at the very heart and core of the true gospel of the Kingdom of God!

Three Common Ideas

Among the millions of professing Christians who still expect the second coming of Christ, there are hundreds of differing concepts about the time and manner of His return. The three principal ideas are the "Post-millennial Coming," the "Secret Rapture," and the "Spiritual Coming."

It was not until about 1700 A. D. that an English clergyman put forward the idea that Christ's second coming would *follow* the millennium — the time during which His Kingdom was prophesied to rule the earth. But those who maintain *this* idea are finding it increasingly difficult to believe that modern man can *ever* achieve worldwide peace and prosperity without the intervention of Christ's "strong hand" (Isa. 40:10).

Man is now literally on the brink of blasting or polluting himself — and all earthly life — from the face of this planet! That fact alone should tell us *why* — and partly *WHEN* — Christ must return.

The "Secret Rapture"

The second common idea accepted by millions of professing Christians is the "Secret Rapture." According to this belief, Jesus will return to this earth in two phases. First, He will return *secretly* to whisk away all true Christians to heaven to protect them from "The Great Tribulation." Therefore, it is believed that the Church's promised place of safety is not on this earth, but up in heaven. The second phase is believed to be His "public" coming at which time all will be able to see and hear Him.

But the rapture theory is actually an even more modern invention than the post-millennial

theory. The early New Testament Church of God never heard of it. Nor indeed did anyone else until about 1830, when it was espoused by a few people in Britain and later popularized in the famous *Scofield Reference Bible*.

Those first few advocates of the rapture theory fervently believed that they were living in the last three and one half years of earth's history. When that length of time was exceeded and



The "Rapture" theory maintains all true Christians will be secretly whisked away to heaven by the returning Christ. But is that really what the scripture says?

Christ still had not "caught them away," they were forced to alter their doctrine to a general expectancy that Christ *might* return — unannounced — at any moment!

From those few people the doctrine of the "Secret Rapture" has spread to nearly all Protestantism.

Is Christ Already Here?

The third common idea is that Christ has *already* returned. Many assume that Jesus came the second time as the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. His Kingdom was the Church He founded at that time, say the proponents of this theory, and therefore today all the churches together constitute the "Kingdom of God."

But such a kingdom would not fulfill dozens of plain prophecies. Also, this theory ignores the fact that the Apostle Paul and all early true Christians *still* looked forward to the second coming of Christ and His Kingdom *long after* that particular Pentecost!

What is the TRUTH?

Let's begin to *prove* the facts about Jesus Christ's dramatic return with our own eyes... and our Bibles!



Ambassador College, Keystone Photos

IN GOD'S NAME — Many of history's bloodiest wars have been fought in the name of religion. For centuries, soldiers belonging to the same faiths have killed each other in the "name of God." Could these churches really constitute the "Kingdom of God"? Above: Soldier's helmet advertises his trust in God. Left: War memorial depicts a soldier praying to his god — the same god his enemies prayed to!

LESSON 3

Has Christ Already Come?

Let's notice the warnings of Christ Himself concerning His promised return.

1. Did Jesus warn that some would claim He had already come *before* His true return would take place? Matt. 24:26; Mark 13:21.

2. Did false teachers proclaim that very idea after His resurrection? II Thes. 2:1-2. (The King James rendering, "is at hand," in verse 2 is misleading. Other translations render this more accurately as "has come.") Did the Apostle Paul emphatically refute this false assumption? Verse 3.

3. Did Paul go on to warn that there must yet come a further falling into error — an apostasy from the truth — *before* the return of Jesus Christ? Same verse. Did Jesus also speak of this as something which had to occur *before* He returned? Compare Matthew 24:5, 11, 24 with Revelation 6:2.

COMMENT: Jesus, the Revelator (Rev. 1:1), used the symbol of a rider on a white horse to picture *false* ministers and prophets claiming to

represent Christ or His Church. The *real* Christ comes on the white horse described in Revelation 19:11. Notice that Christ pictures Himself as returning with a *sword* — the Word of God (Rev. 19:15; Heb. 4:12) — whereas the devil's counterfeit is pictured with a *bow* in his hand (Rev. 6:2).

Notice, too, that the perversion of God's truth marks only the *beginning* of a long sequence of events (covering over 1900 years) culminating in Christ's return and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

4. Before His resurrection, did Jesus make it clear that His Kingdom was not at that time, nor ever would be, "of this world"? John 18:36. Therefore, could any or all of the churches of *this world* constitute God's Kingdom, as so many seem to think? Same verse.

COMMENT: This "world" or system (Greek *cosmos*) encompasses all that is characteristic of the age of man. And certainly, as history reveals, *the churches* are a PART of this age! They have engaged in political struggles, ruled empires, caused the shedding of much blood, especially in the Middle Ages. Therefore, if the churches of Christendom constitute God's Kingdom, then

that kingdom is a part of this world, and Jesus didn't know what He was talking about!

Jesus stated plainly: "But now is my KINGDOM *not from hence* [did not begin at that time]" — though His spiritual CHURCH (Matt. 16:18) *did begin* on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

So Jesus Christ Himself emphatically denied, *in advance*, the false concept that later formed the basis for church-political dominance in the Middle Ages.

5. When asked by His disciples if He would restore the Kingdom in their day, what did Jesus reply? Acts 1:6-8. But were they shortly to receive *power* that was *NOT* of a political nature? Verse 8. What were they to do with this power? Same verse and Matt. 28:18-20.

COMMENT: Notice that the apostles were not given to know the time of the establishment of the Kingdom, but *were* to be filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Jesus' disciples did not *at that time* receive political power to rule the nations. The Kingdom of God was not *then* to be set up. But they were to receive *spiritual* power that would enable them to be "WITNESSES" to the world of Christ's resurrection, and to "teach all nations" the ways of God.

While Jesus Himself was AWAY IN HEAVEN, He promised He would be with them (and their successors) *in spirit only* until the end of *this* age — until the end of this present world of human misrule — until His return to set up the Kingdom of God on earth.

6. What scripture proves conclusively that the *Kingdom of God* could not have been established on earth yet? I Cor. 15:50. Would you say the people attending the various churches are *still* flesh and blood?

When Christ WON'T Return

Another and more modern concept is that Jesus will come AFTER peace and harmony permeate the earth for a thousand years, with all the nations in perfect accord. Could this possibly be true in the light of the Scriptures?

1. What does Acts 3:21 tell us concerning the *restoration* of all things?

2. When Jesus returns, what will the ambassadors of peace be doing, and what will the general condition of the earth be like? Isa. 33:7-8.

COMMENT: Obviously the earth will be in utter CHAOS — not at peace — *before* Christ returns!

3. What scriptures prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that Christ returns *before*, and not after, peace and harmony fill the earth for a thousand years? Rev. 5:10; 20:4.

COMMENT: Your Bible shows that Christ does not come after a millennium (1000 years) of perfect human rule. To *abolish human misrule* and establish the Kingdom — the rule — of God, is the reason Jesus returns a second time. Since resurrected Christians will reign *with* Christ for a thousand years, He obviously must come *before* the 1000 years commence!

End-Time Commission Must First Be Fulfilled

1. Before His crucifixion, did Jesus' followers anticipate that the Kingdom of God would be established very soon? Luke 19:11. What did Jesus say in answer to this mistaken idea? Verse 12.

COMMENT: In this parable the "nobleman" refers to Jesus. The "far country" is heaven, to which He returned after His resurrection, and the "servants" are true Christians.

2. Will Christ receive a kingdom while away in heaven? Compare Luke 19:12 with Daniel 7:13-14.

COMMENT: Plainly, the parable in Luke 19 covers the time from Christ's ascension to heaven (the "far country") until His return to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

3. While the nobleman — Christ — is away, must the servants become profitable by *increasing* their talents? Luke 19:13, 15; Matt. 25:15-19.

4. What duty must the servants — true Christians — *especially* fulfill before the end of this age and the second coming of Christ? Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20.

COMMENT: Jesus made it plain that the gospel of the Kingdom must go to all nations *before* His coming!

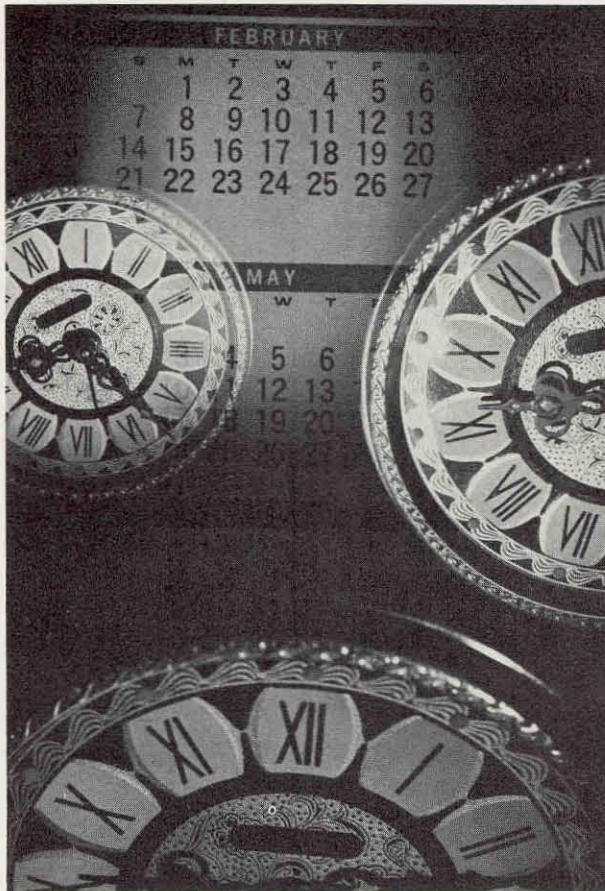
Can We Know the Exact Time?

Shortly before His ascension to heaven, Jesus also made it very plain that He would return after a *fixed sequence of events*. He gave an outline of these events to His disciples upon the Mount of Olives. In Lesson 2 we studied that outline as it is recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. You should reread Matthew 24 and note all the events which were prophesied to occur *before* Christ returns.

Can we really determine from these prophecies the *exact* time of His coming? Let's see:

1. Will God's intervention in world affairs and the second coming of Christ be universally expected? Luke 21:35.

2. To what period in earth's history did Jesus compare His return? Matt. 24:37. Did the people before the Deluge really expect God's



supernatural intervention? Verses 38, 39. Will people today expect God's intervention and the second coming of Christ? Same three verses.

3. Will those who are watching and preparing *know* the day and hour of Christ's return? Matt. 25:13.

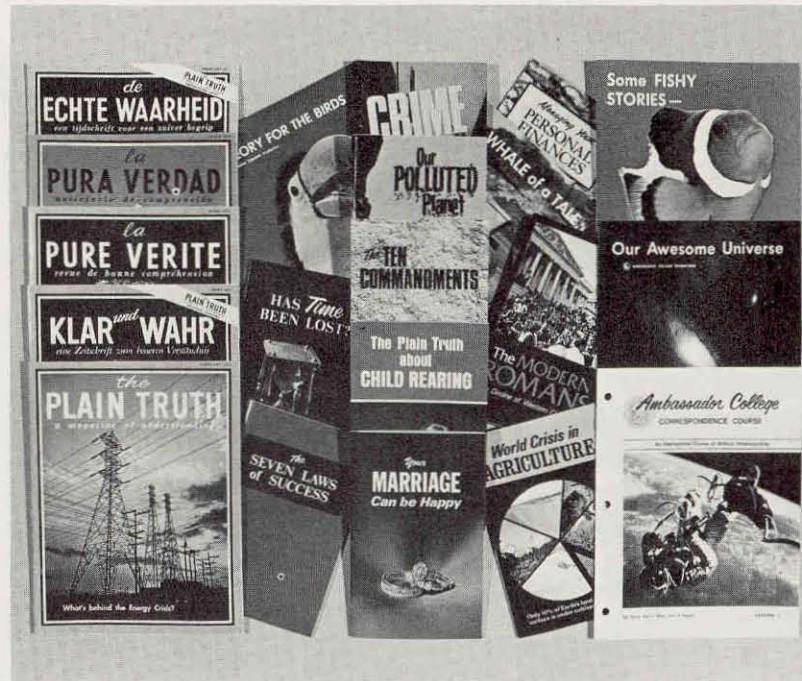
COMMENT: These utterances of Jesus have often been taken to mean that only the apostles would not know the day or the hour, but that we in these last days *would* know it. This is emphatically **NOT** true! Notice:

4. Did Peter ask Jesus if He meant *only* the apostles would be unable to know the day or the hour, or if He meant *all* — even those of *us* today — would not know? Luke 12:40-41. What was Jesus' reply? Verses 42-43. Is Jesus' warning especially for our generation — those alive "when he comes"? Notice again Jesus' reply in verse 43.

COMMENT: How plain that Jesus meant His servants of *this* generation would **NOT** know the day or the hour!

5. Since we cannot know the day and hour, can we nevertheless know *very near* the actual time of His return? Matt. 24:32-33.

COMMENT: Recall that Jesus had already given in this chapter the signs that would *precede* His second coming.



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Left: As Jesus said, no one can know the precise day or hour of His return. But before He returns, the truth of God — expounded in the sampling of free literature shown above — will have been proclaimed worldwide as a "witness" to all nations.

How Christ Will Return

How will Christ return? Will He come silently, invisibly, as a "thief in the night"? Is He returning to secretly "rapture" away His Church?

Is Christ coming in *two phases* — once "for" His saints to secretly take them to heaven — and then "with" them to set up His Kingdom?

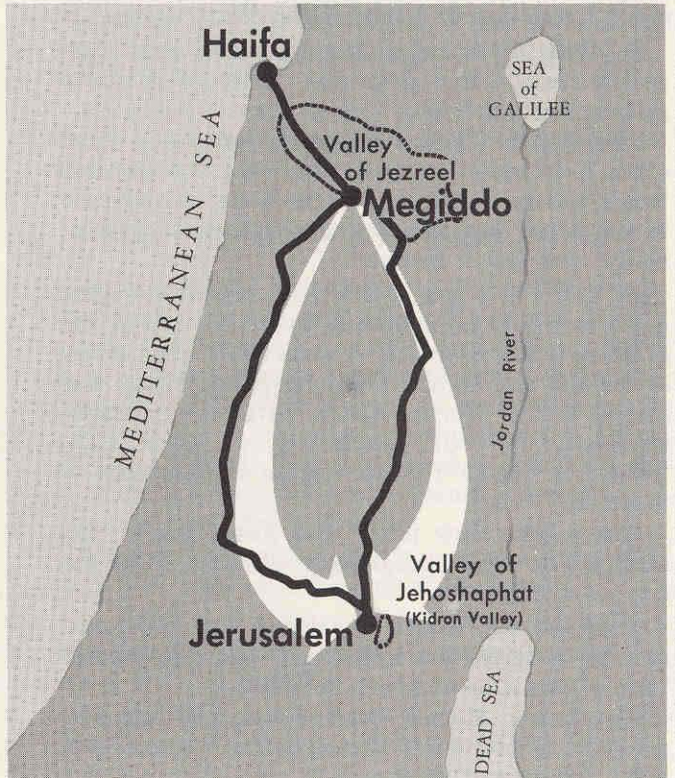
The Bible gives us the clear, concise answers.

1. What does I Thessalonians 5:2-3 say is to come on the world as a "thief in the night"? Are Christians to be vigilant so this period of upheaval — the "day of the Lord" — doesn't catch them unawares? Verse 4-6.

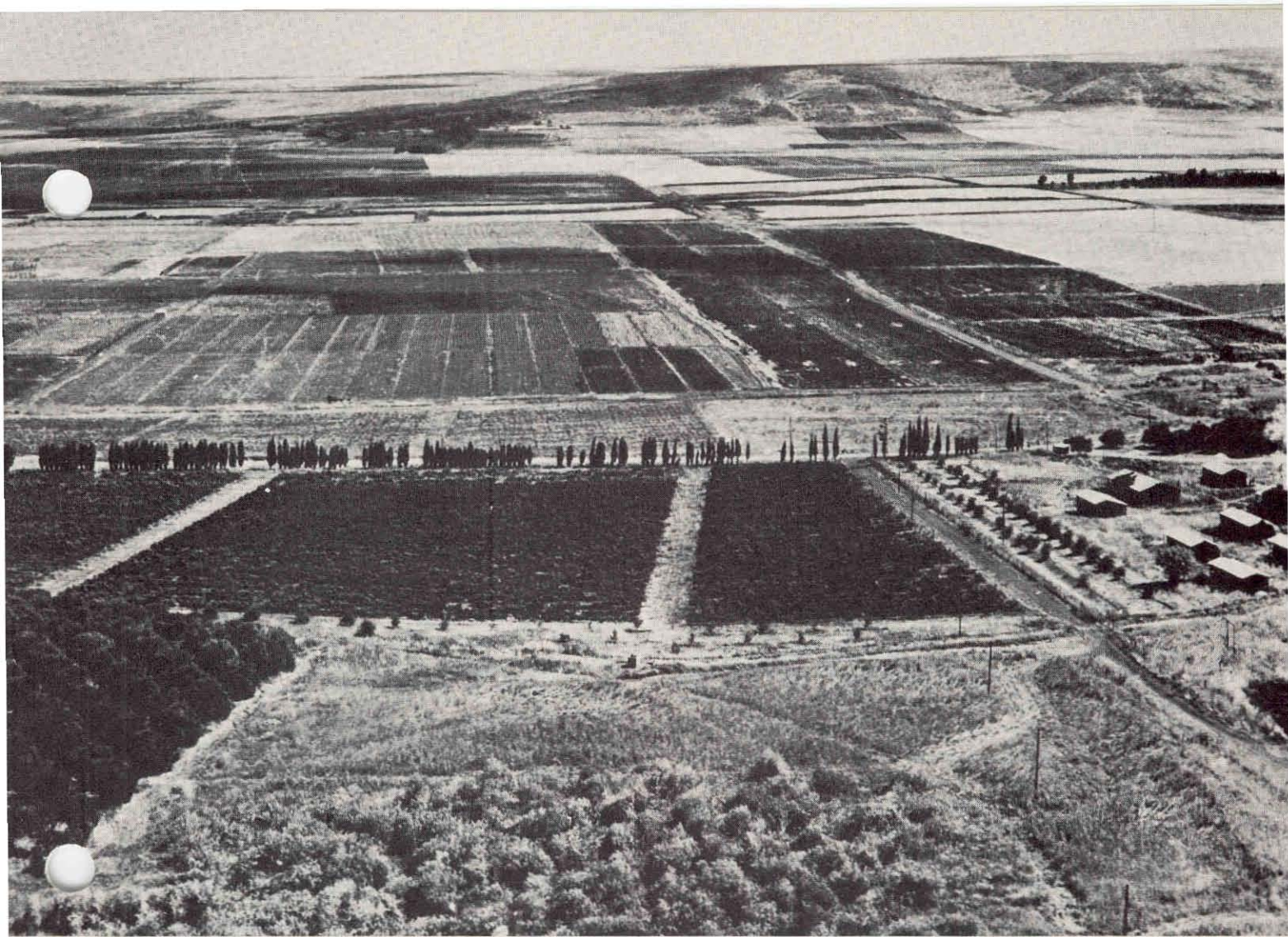
2. And yet is Christ also pictured as coming as a "thief"? Rev. 16:15. Does this mean He will return secretly — invisibly — in a clandestine manner?

COMMENT: That's a fair question. But here's another question to ponder: When thieves or burglars rob a home, do they come **INVISIBLY**? Of course not!

A thief, however, usually comes at night when the household is away or asleep. He catches them *unaware*, off their guard — **SURPRISES** them! You never know *WHEN* a thief is coming. If you did, you would call the police and be prepared for him. The big question you would want



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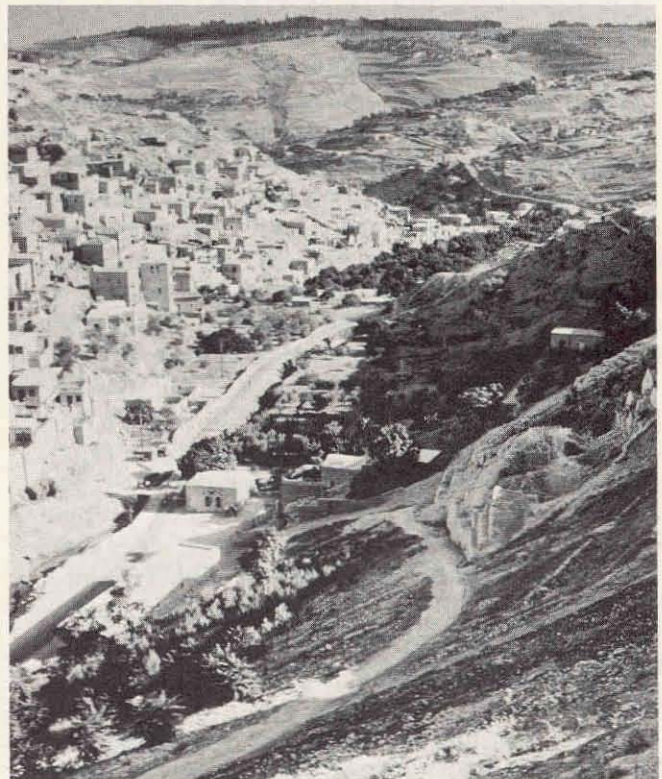
"ARMAGEDDON"

VALLEY OF JEZREEL BORDERING MEGIDDO

Scripture reveals that just before God establishes His rule on earth, armies will gather in the valley of Jezreel adjoining Megiddo. They will then march on Jerusalem to fight Jesus Christ who is coming to enforce peace on a rebellious, war-torn world.

KIDRON VALLEY — Here Christ will vanquish the rebellious armies attempting to destroy Him after He has returned to earth.

Above: Z. Kluger Photo
Left to right: Ambassador College Photos & Art



answered if you already *knew* a thief was planning to rob your home would be *when*.

So it is with the coming of Christ! He will not come invisibly — any more than a thief comes invisibly. But He will come *UNEXPECTEDLY!* No one will know exactly *when* He is going to come.

Jesus Himself explained: "Watch therefore: for ye know not *what hour* your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have *watched*, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also *READY*; for in such an hour as ye think *not* the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:42-44).

And so Jesus likened His coming to a "thief" in respect to the *time* of His coming and the element of *SURPRISE!*

How plain!

3. Now turn to Matthew 24. Does Jesus describe a tremendous *noise* which will rend the air at His coming? Matt. 24:30-31. Isn't this the time when He "gathers together his elect"? Verse 31.

4. Will Christ's return from heaven also be accompanied by a tremendous shout? I Thes. 4:16. Is this the time the saints are "caught up" to be with Him? Verses 16, 17.

COMMENT: Obviously Christ's coming will NOT be a clandestine, secretive event at all!

To Come VISIBLY!

1. When Christ returns will He be visible to everyone? Matt. 24:27; Rev. 1:7.

COMMENT: The Greek word *astrape* used in Matthew 24:27 may mean the lightning of thunderstorms, or any brilliant illumination. Now what brilliant light "comes out of the east and shines even unto the west"? Why, the SUN, of course! Can you see the sun? Of course you can! Christ's presence will be "as the SUN shineth in his strength" (Rev. 1:16). It will be obvious — nobody will be able to miss it.

The expression, "and they also which pierced him" in Revelation 1:7 does not prove that the ONE Roman soldier who literally pierced Jesus' side, or the Jews who were living then, will be alive at His coming. It actually refers to the entire human family — YOU AND ME! *Our* sins took His life (Zech. 12:10). Revelation 1:7 simply shows that all who are *alive* when He returns will be able to see Him. And all the rest of humanity will see Him *later*, when they are resurrected.

2. Did the angelic messenger who spoke to the disciples right after Christ's ascension from

the Mount of Olives affirm that He would return "IN LIKE MANNER" as He left? Acts 1:10-11. What was the manner of His leaving? — was He "seen" until He disappeared *in the clouds*? Verse 9. Will He at His return again become visible "in the clouds"? I Thes. 4:17.

3. Finally, what does Zechariah 14:4 have to say about Christ's return to that same Mount of Olives, near Jerusalem, from which He ascended? Then He will not make a "near miss" and turn right around and go back to heaven for three and one half or seven years, will He? Obviously not!

COMMENT: Christ's visible, advertised, unmistakable coming is plainly described in the Bible — *in great detail* — but there is not one word mentioning a secret, preliminary "rapture" of Christians to heaven!

Only ONE "Second Coming"!

Some will still contend that this visible and audible coming is the *second phase* of Christ's return. Here is more proof that this idea is utterly false!

1. Does the *resurrection* of the dead in Christ clearly take place at His return? I Thes. 4:15-16. Does it occur at the exact moment the trumpet ("trump") mentioned in verse 16 blows? I Cor. 15:51-52.

THE STORY FLOW OF REVELATION

CHAPTERS 6-11, 14-16

THE SEVEN SEALS

1st — False Prophets

2nd — War

3rd — Famine

4th — Pestilence

5th — The Tribulation

6th — Heavenly Signs

7th — The Seven Trumpet
Plagues (see box below)

("DAY OF THE LORD" BEGINS)

| | | |
|--|------------------|---|
| The Seven Trumpet Plagues (<i>"Day of the Lord"</i>) | 1st | Injure the earth, sea, trees and rivers. |
| | 2nd | |
| | 3rd | |
| | 4th | |
| | 5th — First Woe | Third Woe — or The Seven Last Plagues. Second coming occurs. |
| | 6th — Second Woe | |
| | 7th | |

2. Is the trumpet mentioned in I Thessalonians 4:16 and I Corinthians 15:52 the same as the one blown in Revelation 11:15? Rev. 11:18.

COMMENT: Some will claim that the *last* trumpet mentioned in I Corinthians 15:52 is different from the seventh or last trump mentioned in Revelation 11:15. But notice in Revelation 11:18 that John was inspired to write that the seventh trump is the *time of the resurrection!*

John is describing the same momentous event Paul did in I Thessalonians 4 and I Corinthians 15. Thus we see that Christ will return and the saints will be resurrected at the mighty blast of a great trumpet which will be heard by *all the earth!*

Significance of the Greek Word "Parousia"

Those who insistently adhere to the rapture theory claim the Greek word *parousia*, translated "coming" in Matthew 24:27, does not mean "coming" at all. They say it refers to His "secret nearness," so that when Jesus' disciples asked Him for the "sign" of His coming, they were actually asking for a sign of the "rapture."

What about it?

The scriptures we have studied already have clearly shown the manner and approximate time of Christ's return. But what about this word *parousia*? Does it really indicate a preliminary SECRET coming after all?

1. The Greek word *parousia* (number 3952 in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*) is translated "coming" in many different scriptures. I Thessalonians 3:13 is one example. Does this verse say that Christ's *parousia* is "with" all His saints? Then could it possibly be referring to a secret coming FOR His saints three and one half or more years *before* He returns openly "with" them?

COMMENT: Wouldn't you think that after Christ had gone into such detail to answer the disciples' questions (Matt. 24:3), that He would have *at least mentioned* the "rapture" or His "invisible presence"? But no such mention is found in this chapter or in all the Bible!

2. But notice another scripture. At His "coming" (*parousia*), what will Christ do to "that Wicked [one]" who has seated himself "as God" in the temple of God? II Thes. 2:4, 8.

COMMENT: Clearly, Christ's coming to execute judgment is His *parousia* — His *visible* and *POWERFUL* "coming" to this earth!

Notice that not only does this verse show that the wicked one is to be destroyed *at the parousia* of Christ, but it also speaks of the *BRIGHTNESS* of His *parousia*. Plainly, the *parousia* of Christ is not a secret, clandestine, *INVISIBLE* event at all!

Where Will Christians Be Protected From the Tribulation?

1. What did Jesus say is to happen shortly BEFORE His one and only second coming? Matt. 24:21, 29. And what happens next? Verse 30.

COMMENT: Here we find that before Christ's coming a Great Tribulation is going to occur on earth. These verses show that Christ will *not* return until AFTER the Great Tribulation and AFTER great heavenly signs occur!

2. What did Christ tell His followers *in Judea* to do when they see a particular "abomination of desolation" set up? Matt. 24:15-20; Luke 21:20-21.

COMMENT: This is exactly what true Christians did before Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. But this prophecy, remember, is *dual*. It also gives Christians in Judea *at the end time* instructions about what to do when the "abomination of desolation" is set up. If there were to be a "secret rapture," Christ's followers would not have to be concerned about either the winter or the Sabbath or invading armies!

3. Did Jesus believe in "rapturing" His followers out of the world to protect them? Or did He anticipate another means of protection — *on the earth*? John 17:15.

4. Does Christ promise to keep the overcomers of His Church *safe* in the "hour of temptation"—the coming Great Tribulation? Rev. 3:10.

5. A "woman" symbolizes a CHURCH (see II Cor. 11:1-2; Eph. 5:23-29; Gal. 4:26). Will God provide a *place of safety* for the end-time true Church where they will also be protected from the devil (the "dragon" — Rev. 12:9)? Rev. 12:14-16. Where will it be? Same verses.

COMMENT: Notice that the "earth" helps the "woman." No mention here of heaven, or of a rapture!

Obviously, then, the "saints" — true Christians of God's Church — will be *on the earth* during the Great Tribulation — not up in heaven as proponents of the rapture theory believe! But Christ promises the "saints" a place of safety — *on this earth*. Take note, however, that not every Christian will have qualified himself for this protection, and many will have to go *through* that Tribulation!

Who Returns With Christ?

When Christ returns to the Mount of Olives in the same manner as He departed (Acts 1:11), He definitely will not be alone. Notice who will come with Him:

1. Will all the "saints" (true Christians) be with Jesus Christ when He returns to the

Mount of Olives? Zech. 14:4, 5. Notice the last few words of verse 5.

2. Did the Apostle Paul speak of Christ coming "with" His saints, who are now *sleeping* in death? I Thes. 3:13; 4:13-14. Do they return from heaven, or just from the *atmosphere* of the earth — the clouds into which they will have risen to meet Him? Chapter 4, verses 15-17.

COMMENT: Both the resurrected dead in Christ and the living Christians (then made immortal) will not only rise to meet the returning Christ in the air, but will then come down immediately with Him to the earth.

3. Will they stay with Christ *forever*? I Thes. 4:17. Where will He be? Turn to Zechariah 14:4 and Revelation 5:10; 20:4 once again.

4. Who else is scheduled to come with Christ at this time? Mark 8:38; Rev. 19:14.

COMMENT: When Christ came to the earth the first time, He was scourged, mocked and abused (John 19:1-3). But when He returns as King of kings to set up the Kingdom of God, He will return with GREAT POWER AND GLORY (Matt. 24:30), and a great army of angels will accompany Him!

What Christ Will DO When He Returns

Jesus Christ came over 1900 years ago as a meek lamb to be slain for the sins of the world. But when He comes again, He will be *wrathful* — ANGRY — against all evil! He will use His mighty power to change the ways which have caused all the sorrow and suffering on earth.

1. What does Revelation 6:16-17 foretell concerning the time of God's wrath on this world? Did Zephaniah foretell this same time? Zeph. 1:14-15; 2:2-3. Turn also to Isaiah 13:6-7 and Ezekiel 7:19.

COMMENT: Most people have heard little or nothing about the "day of the Lord" — and yet the day of the Lord is described in more than 30 different prophecies scattered throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

2. At the very time when the last (the seventh) trumpet sounds (Rev. 11:15), and Christ returns, is God wrathful? Rev. 11:18.

COMMENT: The wrath of the "day of the Lord" manifests itself in the seven "trumpet" plagues which are unleashed consecutively over a period of months (Revelation, chapters 8; 9; 11:15-19) and *culminates* in the second coming of Christ and the administering of the seven last plagues (Rev. 15:1 and chapter 16).

3. Is the great personage mentioned in Revelation 19:11 to make war? What is His title?

Verse 16. What else is He called? Rev. 17:14. Who is the "Lamb" of God? John 1:29.

COMMENT: These verses plainly show that Christ will come with an army of angels to *punish* and *conquer* the rebellious nations of the earth.

4. Exactly WHY will God have to punish mankind? Rev. 11:18, last few words, and Zeph. 1:17.

COMMENT: Christ will be angry at the *sins* of mankind. To *SAVE* the human race *ALIVE* (Matt. 24:22), He is coming to punish in *love*! Otherwise, man would destroy all life upon the earth!

For nearly 6,000 long years God has given stubborn, rebellious, misguided human beings every chance to turn to His ways of peace and happiness. Instead, men have turned their backs on their Creator. They have *REFUSED* to follow the ways which would result in the fulfillment of their desires for peace. Men continue to devise forces which now threaten the annihilation of all life!

Therefore, as any loving parent punishes his child who will not listen to gentle admonition, God will have to punish this world *to bring it to*



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MAN'S WAY — The time-worn repetition of history proves that man's way to peace involves trampling on and destroying human beings — inflicting pain, misery and death!

its senses! The glorified Christ is coming in all the splendor, power and glory of God to STOP escalating wars, nuclear mass destruction, human pain and suffering. He is coming to usher in peace, abundant prosperity, happiness and JOY for all mankind.

5. Will the nations of the world also be angry at this time? See Revelation 11:18 once again.

COMMENT: This world doesn't want to change. Man desperately wants to preserve the society he has established upon this earth. Men do not want God to intervene and teach them the way to world peace and prosperity. Instead, they want peace on their *own terms* — even though man's ways to "peace" lead inevitably to more wars and eventually cosmocide.

When Jesus Christ comes to stop world suicide, the nations will quickly drop their own quarrels. The joint military forces of the world will then turn their efforts against Christ and attempt to fight and destroy Him!

The returning Christ will be forced to deal with the nations of this rebellious world in the only language they will understand — *overwhelming force!* What a paradox that men will

at first have to be FORCED into trying the way of life that leads to happiness, prosperity and abundance!

What Is "Armageddon"?

"Armageddon" is a term associated with the wrath of God. Almost everyone has heard of it. World leaders and scientists frequently use this Biblical term when speaking of the inevitability of nuclear warfare, and the destruction of mankind.

Yet few *know* what "Armageddon" really is!

Like most other topics of Biblical prophecy, what is popularly taught about this subject has been generally accepted *without question*. And as with most other Biblical subjects, people have been turned away from the truth and led to embrace fables!

When World War I broke out, many excitedly proclaimed "This is the *armageddon* war!" Then a generation later many assumed that World War II was the war that would end with "Armageddon."

Now the commonly accepted idea is that "Armageddon" is the last battle of a coming war between the Western democracies and Communism. It supposedly will be a battle between atheistic Communism on the one side, *attacking* Jerusalem; with the British and American armies on the other side, *defending* it. And at the precise instant of this battle, it is believed, the second coming of Christ occurs.

But is this really what Biblical prophecy foretells? You may be surprised at *who* will be fighting *whom* at Christ's coming, and *where!*

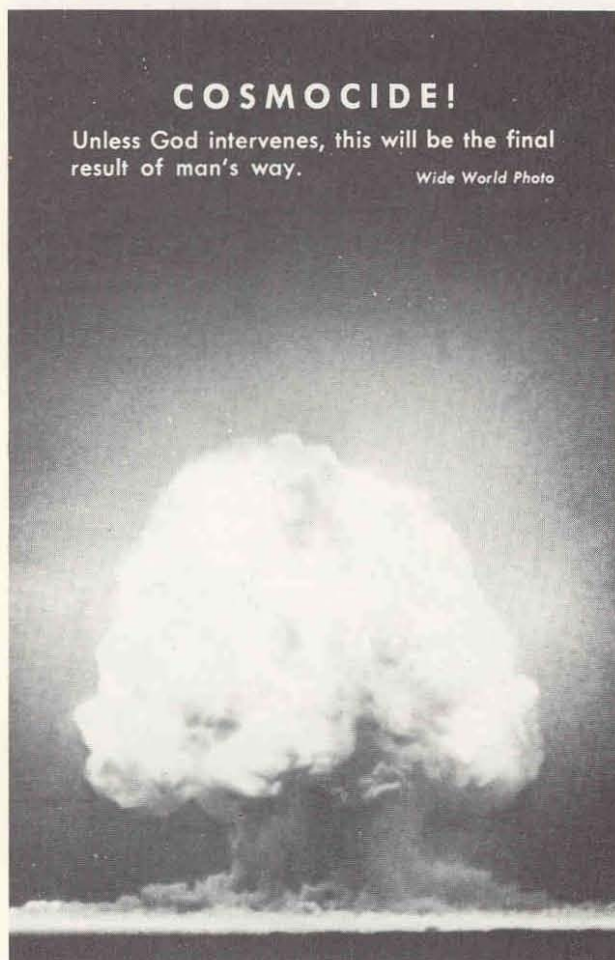
Make no mistake. World War III is on the way! World Wars I and II were merely small forerunners of the UTTER DESTRUCTION which will break suddenly upon the nations. This time it will be so *hellish*, only the second coming of Christ will be able to save mankind from extinction.

That's why God commands us to "WATCH" (Luke 21:36) — to watch *world news* so we may be AWARE of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, and be accounted worthy to ESCAPE the nuclear holocaust soon to fall upon this heedless, rebellious world!

1. In what is the wrath of God "filled up"? Rev. 15:1.

COMMENT: The *seventh* or last trumpet (Rev. 11:15) consummates — COMPLETES — God's wrath. How? By announcing the terrifying "seven last plagues"! The Moffatt translation renders the last part of Revelation 15:1: "For they [the seven last plagues] *complete* the wrath of God."

2. What are these plagues of wrath compared to? Rev. 15:7. (Some translations use the word "bowl" instead of vial.) Upon what will



COSMOCIDE!

Unless God intervenes, this will be the final result of man's way.

Wide World Photo

they be poured? Rev. 16:1. Will they cause great suffering upon unrepentant men? Verses 2-11.

COMMENT: Despite this severe punishment, the nations will adamantly refuse to repent of their sins!

3. What will occur when the sixth symbolic vial of God's wrath is poured out? Rev. 16:12. Notice from which *direction* these kings will come. What else happens at this time? Verses 13, 14, 16. Let's carefully analyze what is being depicted by these verses.

World's Armies Assemble

1. *Against whom* will the kings of the earth fight? Rev. 17:14. We have already seen that the "Lamb" is Jesus Christ.

2. Who will incite the nations to fight against their Creator God? Rev. 16:13-14. Who is the dragon? Rev. 12:9. Are these "spirits" therefore Satan's demons?

COMMENT: The word "devils" in the King James Version ought to be rendered *demons*. There is one fallen archangel (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-17) called the "devil," but there are many fallen angels (Jude 6; Rev. 12:7) of lesser rank called "demons" in the Bible.

3. Are these demons responsible for *gathering* the armies of all nations together? Rev. 16:16.

COMMENT: At this time, the demons mentioned in verse 14 will stir up worldwide resistance to Christ.

The proper translation of the inspired Greek of Revelation 16:16 should be as follows: "And **THEY** gathered them together. . . ." This verse is

sometimes rendered incorrectly "And *he* gathered them together. . . ." Notice the *battle* is actually stirred up, *not* by men or nations *alone*, but by spirit demons of Satan the devil.

4. What will these evil spirits do to *cause* the armies to gather? Rev. 16:14.

COMMENT: Notice that these spirits directly influence the leaders of nations—*deceiving* them with miracles — stirring them to a fever-pitch of hatred to fight the new "invader from outer space" — Christ!

5. Exactly *where* do the devil's demons cause the armies of the nations to be GATHERED TOGETHER in preparation for the great battle against Christ? Turn again to Revelation 16:16. Then where does the actual battle take place? Zech. 14:2.

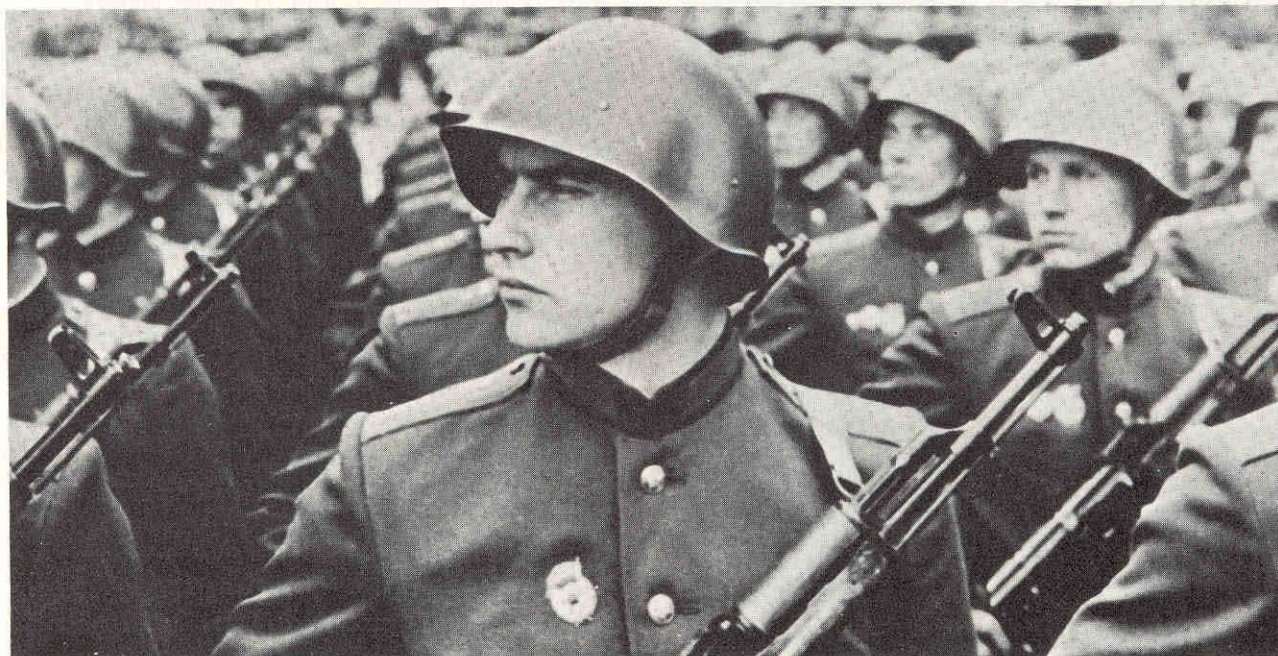
COMMENT: The nations will marshal their armies at a place called Armageddon. "Armageddon" is not an English word. Rather it comes from the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name *Har Megiddo*. (The Hebrew prefix "Har" means hill or mountain.)

Megiddo was a strong fortification dating from ancient times, situated approximately 55 miles north of Jerusalem. The mound that remains is a few miles southeast of Haifa — a natural port and industrial center providing ideal facilities for landing troops.

The ruins of Megiddo are located on the edge of the plain of Megiddo, an oval-shaped valley once called the Plain of Esdraelon, but now commonly called the Valley of Jezreel. It is a

Vast armies will converge on Jerusalem to fight the returning Jesus Christ!

CTK-Tass Photo



large flat area ideal for the *assembling* of military equipment and personnel.

The hill of Megiddo was strongly fortified as long ago as the days of King Solomon (I Kings 9:15). It was a literal *fortress* rising above the surrounding plain. The fortress hill Megiddo serves as a *type*, or forerunner, of the bristling armaments that shall soon envelop the whole surrounding area.

Historians have said that more battles have been fought in the Valley of Jezreel than anywhere else on earth. However, when Christ returns, the armies will only *gather* here. From this natural staging area they will advance southward toward Jerusalem to fight against Him. The final battle will then take place in the environs of Jerusalem!

The Great "Battle of God Almighty"

1. What is the name of the climactic battle that determines WHO will rule the earth? Rev. 16:14, last part.

COMMENT: The battle that ensues will reveal whether MAN or GOD shall rule the earth for the next thousand years. It is called the "Battle of That Great Day of God Almighty" — often called the "Battle of Armageddon"!

2. This battle is described in Revelation 19:11-21. Who shall fight whom? Verses 14, 19. Will the U.S.S.R. and her Communist satellites fight against British and American armies, as so many have assumed? Or will it be the armies of a union of nations from the "east" and the armies of "the whole world" attempting to fight against Christ? Turn to Revelation 16:12-14 once again.

COMMENT: The nations, already engaged in an all-out struggle for *world* dominion, will be angry and furious when they see a heavenly "invader" has come to intervene in human affairs. In a frenzy of rage, these nations will prepare to do battle with and attempt to destroy Christ and His armies!

3. Exactly *where* does the Bible say this battle will take place? Joel 3:1-2, 9-14. Compare verse 13 with Revelation 14:18-20; 19:15.

COMMENT: "Jehoshaphat" means "Judgment of Jehovah" [or more correctly, "Judgment of the *Eternal*"] (*Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*). The focal point of the battle will be in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, also called the "Valley of Decision" in the Bible. This valley is a deep ravine having very steep sides. It borders the city of Jerusalem on the east. According to *Unger's Dictionary of the Bible*, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which is situated between Jerusalem and

the Mount of Olives, is *now* known as the "Kidron Valley" (page 564).

Zechariah 14:1-4 plainly says that Christ will fight earth's hate-filled armies when He returns and stands upon the Mount of Olives, just *east* of Jerusalem. And notice that Revelation 14:20 specifically states that the *blood* of these enemies — symbolically represented by the juice of grapes being pressed out in a wine-press — will flow "without [outside] the city." There will be so much bloodshed that the blood will rise (in some places) as high as horses' bridles!

Christ Is Coming Soon!

Awesome times are ahead. It may seem incredible, but Bible prophecy is very plain.

Through these first three lessons of the Ambassador College Correspondence Course you have seen that this *IS* indeed the very *END TIME* of Bible prophecy! You've seen that God, through His prophets, apostles and servants, has revealed a *sequence of events* leading up to the dramatic return of Jesus Christ.

These events are as *certain* to occur as the rising and setting of the sun!

Therefore, you need to "*watch*" (Luke 21:36) world events as never before! Be vigilant. Keep abreast of world news. You should read at least one news magazine every week. And by all means read *The PLAIN TRUTH* magazine. (It is *free* of charge, just as this course is free of tuition cost.) It makes world news plain in the light of Bible prophecy.

You have clearly seen in your own Bible that Christ will come *visibly*, and with great *POWER* to a God-rejecting world to save it from itself. His dramatic coming will usher in the beginning of the Millennium — 1,000 years of peace and prosperity for all mankind!

People will finally learn to lead happy and abundant lives under the righteous rule of Christ. Under His guidance and rulership the whole world will receive God's abundant blessings. But more about that wonderful world tomorrow in the next lesson!

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

- | | | | | |
|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 5. A | 9. D | 13. T | 17. I |
| 2. D | 6. C | 10. A | 14. F | 18. D |
| 3. D | 7. D | 11. T | 15. F | 19. F |
| 4. B | 8. A | 12. F | 16. H | 20. B |

Rate Yourself

- | | | |
|---------------|-------|-----------|
| 19-20 correct | | excellent |
| 16-18 correct | | good |
| 13-15 correct | | fair |

TEST YOUR MEMORY

This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you've finished, check your choices with the correct answers listed on page 15, and then rate yourself.

1. The message about Christ's coming to set up the Kingdom of God to rule this earth **A.** is the heart and core of the true Gospel. **B.** was simply a Jewish fable. **C.** originated as a heresy of the Gnostics. **D.** has no adherents today.

2. History proves that the early Church **A.** taught that the Church is the Kingdom. **B.** believed the duty of Christians is to force Christianity on the world. **C.** did not expect Jesus to return. **D.** fervently believed in a coming millennium of peace preceded by the second coming of Christ.

3. Jesus Christ's second coming **A.** was the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. **B.** was secret, probably in 1914. **C.** will occur after the Millennium. **D.** will begin the Millennium.

4. Jesus warned the world through the apostles that **A.** there would be a renewed fervor to learn the truth before His return. **B.** there would be those who would claim He had returned before He was supposed to. **C.** the "rapture" would occur. **D.** His return would be in two phases — first secretly, then publicly.

5. Christ's return will be **A.** with the great noise of a trumpet and the loud voice of an archangel. **B.** quiet. **C.** as a "thief" to steal away His Church. **D.** just as most people expect.

6. The last trumpet, which signals the return of Jesus Christ, **A.** will be heard only by the saved. **B.** is not the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15. **C.** will be heard by the whole world. **D.** will be the signal for all nations to make peace.

7. Christ will come from heaven **A.** secretly. **B.** invisibly. **C.** without companions. **D.** with armies of angels to meet the resurrected saints in the air.

8. Christ's coming will occur **A.** unexpectedly. **B.** unlike a "thief in the night." **C.** after a great revival in the churches. **D.** before the seventh trumpet sounds.

9. The Greek word *parousia* is NOT used in connection with Christ's coming **A.** in destroying

"brightness" — II Thes. 2:8. **B.** "with all his saints" — I Thes. 3:13. **C.** "as the lightning" — Matt. 24:27 **D.** in a secret, clandestine manner.

10. The "Secret Rapture" **A.** is a relatively modern concept **B.** is Biblically provable. **C.** should be the "blessed hope" of all Christians in these last days. **D.** is believed in by very few people.

TRUE OR FALSE

11. The return of Jesus Christ will occur at the end of a definite series of prophesied events. **T F**

12. When Christ returns, the nations and their armies will surrender to Him at once. **T F**

13. The nations will be angry and at war when Christ returns. **T F**

14. "Armageddon" is the name of the climactic battle in which Christ will destroy His enemies. **T F**

15. The "seven last plagues" begin the wrath of God. **T F**

MATCHING

Draw a line from each phrase in the left-hand column to the correctly related phrase in the right-hand column.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 16. "Thief in the night" | A. Last trumpet |
| 17. Mount of Olives | B. Defeated armies |
| 18. Three demon spirits | C. "Secret Rapture" |
| 19. Armageddon | D. Gather armies |
| 20. Valley of Jehoshaphat | E. Silently, invisibly |
| | F. Where armies gather |
| | G. U.S.A. vs U.S.S.R. |
| | H. Comes unexpectedly |
| | I. Where Christ returns |
| | J. Nuclear annihilation |