

# How Will It End?

Hope Beyond the Headlines

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Pacific Press® Publishing Association

Nampa, Idaho

Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

[www.pacificpress.com](http://www.pacificpress.com)



ISBN 978-0-8163-3508-4



9 780816 335084

Cover design by Gerald Monks

Originally published in 1984.

The author assumes full responsibility for the accuracy of all facts and quotations as cited in this book.

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ISBN: 978-0-8163-3508-4

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## Introduction

Everyone is curious about the future. Are the world economies doomed to collapse? Is nuclear holocaust inevitable? When will World War III erupt? Which new outbreak of violence will trigger the weapons of mass destruction that will end the earth as we know it?

Is Jesus coming back to planet Earth? What is this battle between God and Satan that we hear about? Does Satan exist? Will Israel become a dominant power as earth's history draws to a close? What deceptions will Satan use to deceive many during the final days? How can we know how near we are to the end? Will there really be a day of judgment? And what about the new earth that the Bible mentions in the book of Revelation? How *will* the world end, anyway?

In the twelve chapters that follow you will discover facts about tomorrow that many have little idea exist in the Scriptures. Each chapter is dedicated to the scriptural explanation of a major event leading up to the most important event in history since the crucifixion—Christ's glorious return to redeem His people.

If you've wondered what the Bible *really* does teach about earth's final days, then *How Will It End?* is must reading for you.

Ralph Blodgett

## Chapter 1

### How Will It End?—The Popular View

“It is now almost forty years since the invention of nuclear weapons . . . . I do not think our luck can hold forever.”

—Carl Sagan, Cornell University scientist.

On Sunday evening, November 20, 1983, 100 million Americans gathered in front of their TV sets to watch ABC’s \$7-million movie, *The Day After*—a television dramatization of how America might look following a nuclear exchange with the U.S.S.R.

The huge viewing audience—the largest in TV movie history—witnessed a realistic vision (within the limits of what humans can imagine and television can depict) of the impact of a nuclear strike on the residents of Lawrence, Kansas, a town of 53,000 located 38 miles west of Kansas City.

As the ABC dramatization begins, a heart surgeon and his wife watch their daughter prepare to leave home, college students register for classes at the University of Lawrence, a farm family lays plans for their oldest daughter’s wedding, and an airman struggles between loyalty to his wife and duty to his country as the armed services are unexpectedly put on full alert.

Woven through the first half of the film are TV and radio news bulletins telling a story few notice at first: East Germany blockades West Berlin, warning is met with ultimatum, Moscow begins to evacuate its citizens, and Russian troops mass near the eastern borders of the communist-bloc countries.

Suddenly, news broadcasts report that NATO armored troops have broken through the blockade, two Soviet MIG 25 s have attacked the NATO building in West Berlin, and advance units of the Soviet army begin invading West Germany. Rapid escalation follows. All too soon, desperately outnumbered NATO forces fire three small nuclear devices—intended for defensive field use only—to halt the advancing Russian troops.

As news of these events reaches the residents of Kansas, people rush to supermarkets for panic buying and jam freeways to get out of town. Military personnel hurry to their posts, unlock missile code

boxes, and scramble Air Force bombers into the air as the machines war lurch irreversibly forward.

Suddenly, news of the destruction of a U.S. ship in the Persian Gulf and reports of Soviet readiness to launch their huge nuclear arsenal prompt U.S. generals and advisors to adopt a “use ’em or lose ’em” attitude regarding America’s vulnerable land-based missiles.

Midway through the film residents of the Lawrence area, which is shown to be peppered with Air Force Minuteman silos, feel the earth shake as American ICBMs blast aloft on their way to Russia.

In one particularly dramatic scene, a mother hanging out laundry witnesses the Minuteman missiles streaking skyward as her two small children stop playing on the lawn to stare up in open-mouthed awe.

According to the movie, it matters not who pushes what button first, the end results will be the same. Suddenly, the various characters realize the inevitable—if the Minuteman missiles are outbound, Soviet warheads must already be on their way inbound!

Moments later *The Day After* depicts the sequence of two Soviet missiles striking the Kansas City area. A little boy in a field turns toward his father, and a flash of light vaporizes them both. Through the sophisticated use of trick photography and special effects, nuclear flames engulf cars on jammed freeways in giant balls of fire.

The video effects are grisly, horrifying, wrenching. Bodies become skeletons, then vaporize in mid-screen; buildings explode in flaming red shards; firestorms devour forests and concrete buildings; immense fireballs engulf everything for miles around.

### **The Final Hour**

In the final hour of the film, people suffer from radiation exposure and die. Lawrence and other outlying cities become tombs for the walking dead—stragglers, looters, wanderers, poachers, and decaying corpses.

Every creature exposed to the contaminated air is soon dead or dying. The few medical centers still functioning at all are jammed, and except for the limited power in batteries, not even a spark of electricity can be found anywhere.\*

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\* Scientists believe that the massive electromagnetic pulse generated by a midair nuclear explosion most likely would disable all electrical generators and burn out transistorized and computerized communications equipment for miles around a destroyed city.

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The scenes projected of a post-apocalyptic world as envisioned by scientists and physicists is unrelentingly bleak, stark, and more depressing than anything ever before dramatized on a screen. In fact, one extraordinary sequence of 1,500 radiation-exposed people jammed into a gymnasium near the end of the film is even more memorable than the burning of Atlanta in *Gone With the Wind*.

The film ends with a message flashed on the screen: "The catastrophic events you have just witnessed are in all likelihood less severe than the destruction that would actually occur in the event of a full nuclear strike."

### Is This How It Ends?

No doubt millions of Americans watching that ABC movie wondered, *Is this how the world will end-in a global thermonuclear holocaust?*

A *USA TODAY* nationwide poll conducted a few weeks after the film's broadcast revealed that 52 percent of Americans worry that a nuclear war with the Soviet Union will eventually erupt, 46 percent fear terrorists may use nuclear weapons for blackmail, and 60 percent believe the events of 1983 made a major war more likely.—*USA TODAY*, December 27, 1983.

These views have been echoed by numerous prominent figures. Scientist Carl Sagan warns, "It is now almost forty years since the invention of nuclear weapons. We have not yet experienced a global thermonuclear war—although on more than one occasion we have come tremulously close. I do not think our luck can hold forever."—*Parade*, October 30, 1983, p. 7.

Evangelist Billy Graham adds, "For the first time in history, man holds in his hands the awesome power to destroy the entire planet in a matter of minutes."—*Star*, December 6, 1983.

Exiled Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, in an open letter to American physicist Sidney Drell, wrote that an "all-out nuclear war means collective suicide." Such a war could "cause man to be destroyed as a biological species and could even cause the annihilation of life on earth. If the 'nuclear threshold' is crossed, *i.e.*, if any country uses a nuclear weapon even on a limited scale, the further course of events would be difficult to control and the most probable result would be swift escalation."—*Time*, July 4, 1983.

Two U.S. senators (Sam Nunn, D-Ga., and John Warner, R-Va.) stated, "There are an increasing number of scenarios that could precipitate the outbreak of nuclear war that neither side anticipated or

intended, possibly involving other nuclear powers or terrorist groups.”—*U.S. News and World Report*, December 5, 1983.

And columnist Jack Anderson, in an August 14, 1983, *Parade* article titled “Can We Have a Missile Accident?” described how a routine Titan missile drill on November 19, 1980, at the McConnell Air Force Base near Wichita, Kansas, nearly became a thermonuclear disaster when the missile accidentally switched into launch sequence. (Scientists later traced the near accident to wires that should have been disconnected—but weren’t—by a missile maintenance crew.)

### What About False Alarms?

False alarms are another problem that many worry could precipitate an all-out war—especially in view of the fact that there have already been false alarms, twice within the seven-month period, November 9, 1979, to June 3, 1980. In both cases one of the North American Air Defense Command computers set off signals that Soviet missiles from land bases and submarines were actually in flight toward U.S. targets. Fortunately, the errors were discovered in time to call off the red alert.

Others stress that almost any minor conflict involving a country of interest to both the United States and Russia could unintentionally escalate into a major nuclear confrontation. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, for example, warned that “a nuclear war would probably get started only by miscalculation.” And another former Defense Secretary, Harold Brown, added, “Strategic war is so obviously catastrophic to all engaged in it that it is only under . . . provocation and escalation—probably from lower levels of conflict—that it has any chance of happening.”—*Time*, March 29, 1982.

Unfortunately, the chronology of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union over the past forty years reveals a discouraging record. *Since the end of World War II, the Soviet Union has used military power as an instrument of foreign policy at least 190 times, and the United States has used military force more than 200 times over the same period!* These shocking facts surfaced in a Pentagon-financed study conducted in 1981 by the Brookings Institution.—*Washington Post*, March 2, 1981.

### The Doomsday Exercise

Many experts wonder just what it would take to turn a minor confrontation between the superpowers into an all-out nuclear holocaust. So often has this question plagued military leaders that in March 1982, Pentagon and Strategic Air Command war-gamers staged



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one of the most elaborate war simulations of the past twenty years. The exercise—called the Domsday Exercise—involved dozens of senior government officials including President Ronald Reagan and Vice-President George Bush and began innocently enough with rising tensions centering on a typical European confrontation.

The simulated superpower showdown during the five-day exercise gradually escalated into a 5,000-megaton missile attack on the American mainland and the death of the President (on the fourth day) and an all-out retaliatory strike on the Soviet Union (on the fifth day) by the surviving U.S. forces.—*Newsweek*, April 5, 1982.

While the elaborate simulation answered dozens of questions in military minds, it left one issue unanswered—How would planet Earth fare following such a war?

### Fragile Balance of Power

To answer that question we must take a quick look at the type of weapons that have already turned our planet into a nuclear porcupine.

In contrast to the twenty-kiloton bomb (equal to 20,000 tons of TNT) that leveled Hiroshima and killed 70,000 persons, the typical nuclear missile warhead or bomber-dropped hydrogen bomb today is *more than 100 times* the strength of the 1945 weapons (equivalent to 1 to 2 million tons of TNT).

To comprehend the destructive power of just one such warhead, picture the results of a 1-megaton nuclear explosion over the White House (*i.e.* the explosive power of a single SSN-6 missile fired from a Soviet submarine). Detonated at about 2,000 feet above the ground, the huge fireball would reduce everything—concrete, steel, brick, et cetera—within three miles of the White House (or twenty-eight square miles) to rubble.

Beyond that, winds of 400 miles per hour—stronger than any hurricane—would blast outward, crushing brick and wood buildings, stripping bark and branches from trees, igniting clothing, hurling people and automobiles through the air. Then as the mushroom cloud rose into the sky, it would suck the ground air back again, adding to the damage. Nearly everything within a five-mile radius of ground zero (or about 78 square miles) would be severely damaged, if not destroyed. People still alive would have third-degree burns, their clothes in flames, their faces and hands charred.

And beyond that, out to eight miles from the point of impact (an additional 94 square miles) brick and wood houses would sustain

moderate damage. Cars would be blown off the Capital Beltway. Burns and eye damage would occur to many exposed survivors. (See illustration.) The heat would start fires beyond the eight-mile radius, and people as far as forty miles away would be cut by glass from shattered windows.

What would it look like from the ground? A *U.S. News and World Report* article describes it with these words: “The 1-megaton weapon would produce an intense white light, followed by a moment of darkness—caused when the explosion became so intense that it was opaque to light—and then an even brighter flash. The second flash would be accompanied by a surge of heat far hotter than the breath of a blast furnace, moving outward in all directions with the speed of light. Anyone exposed to the full power of that heat in downtown Washington would be incinerated.”—November 28, 1983.

So powerful are today’s weapons that it has been estimated that a more-or-less typical strategic warhead of 2 megatons (equivalent to 2 million tons of TNT) packs roughly the same explosive power as all the bombs exploded during World War II—a single weapon with the destructive power of the entire second world war compressed into a few seconds of time and an area thirty miles in diameter!

### **How Many Such Warheads?**

With these sobering thoughts in mind, ponder the fact that as of January 1, 1984, the United States and The Soviet Union together had nearly 48,000 nuclear warheads and bombs in place, ready to be delivered to their opponent’s cities, industrial centers, seaports, bomber airfields, and missile-command centers. These 48,000 nuclear weapons together possess 13,000 megatons of explosive power (*i.e.*, equal to 13 *billion* tons of TNT), enough to vaporize nearly a million Hiroshimas.

Each of our nation’s thirty-one Poseidon submarines carries 16 missiles, and each missile contains from 10 to 14 individually targetable warheads. That means that every Poseidon submarine carries enough firepower to level more than 200 Soviet cities. Said former President Carter in his 1979 State-of-the-Union speech, “Just one of our relatively invulnerable Poseidon submarines—comprising less than 2 percent of our total nuclear force of submarines, aircraft and land-based missiles—carries enough warheads to destroy every large and medium-sized city in the Soviet Union.”—*U.S. News and World Report*, February 12, 1979.

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No wonder 52 percent of Americans fear that a thermonuclear war with the Soviet Union will eventually erupt. No wonder that experts like Dr. George Wald, a Harvard University Nobel Prize-winning scientist, say, "Human life is threatened as never before in the history of this planet . . . . I am one of those scientists who finds it hard to see how the human race is to bring itself much past the year 2000."—*Countdown to Armageddon*, p. 17. No wonder that William Ogle, a retired government official who has participated in some 300 nuclear tests, warns that in a nuclear confrontation between America and Russia, "My own arithmetic says 70 percent of our population would be wiped out."—*U.S. News and World Report*, November 28, 1983.

Unfortunately the numbers of weapons and estimates of destructive force do not tell the whole picture of the results of a thermonuclear war. Not only would radioactive fallout spread for thousands of miles downwind from attack sites, but scientists have recently concluded that the worst danger from a nuclear war would be the "pitch-dark, bone-chilling 'nuclear winter' brought on by the detonation of even less than half the megatonnage in U.S. and Soviet arsenals."—*Time*, November 14, 1983.

According to two blue-ribbon scientific studies presented to a 1983 conference attended by 600 American and foreign scientists and environmentalists, such a war would create a 1.2-billion-ton cloud of dust and smoke that would envelop both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres and block out at least 90 percent of the sun's light, plunging surface temperatures to an average of -13 degrees F. for at least three months. During that period (even in the war broke out in mid-summer), nothing could grow on earth. Everyone who survived the explosions and fallout would freeze or starve to death.—*Time*, November 14, 1983, and *Parade*, October 30, 1983.

Dr. Vladimir Alexandrov, chief of the Department of Climate Models at the Soviet Academy of Sciences, concluded, "A nuclear war of any scope would mean either the disappearance of mankind, or its degradation to a level below the prehistoric one."—*Washington Post*, December 9, 1983.

### **Will God Allow This to Happen?**

The stark outlook for the human race in the event of a nuclear confrontation causes many Christians to wonder if God would allow humans to destroy themselves and other earth species in a thermonuclear holocaust.

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Fortunately, the Bible nowhere supports the popular idea that humans will destroy themselves at the end of time. Rather it indicates that the inhabitants of the earth will be alive to witness Christ's second coming:

"Heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:14–17.

"He cometh with clouds; and *every* eye shall see him . . . : and *all kindreds of the earth* shall wail because of him." Revelation 1:7.

The scriptures plainly declare that it will be the brightness of the Lord's return that will destroy the wicked—not nuclear missiles or hydrogen bombs: "Then shall the Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

### **What About All the Weapons?**

If this be the case, then why all the nuclear weapons? What part do they play in the final events?

Actually their very existence is powerful evidence that we have reached the end of time and that Christ's return is at hand.

Said Jesus to His disciples, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars . . . . For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Matthew 24:6, 7, 33, 34.

Since man now has in his hands—for the first time in human history—the awesome ability to annihilate all life on this planet in a matter of hours or days, time cannot continue much longer. Therefore, it is all the more imperative that concerned humans find out what is in store for planet Earth as history ticks out its final hours. In order to be prepared, we *need* to know how it will end, and to be reassured that there is hope beyond the gloomy headlines.

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With this in mind, let's turn to the next chapter and find out how earth got into such a mess and who is behind the sin, disease, and death that we find in the world.