

## Shock and Awe—and Speed

### Christ's Soon-Coming Campaign for Earth

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I'm sure that most of you have been watching the war. When I get up, my kids say, "Are you gonna turn on the war?"

I think that it is probably that way just about anywhere. We've gravitated to watching this thing. You find yourself attracted to it because of what is going on. As Martin Collins put it yesterday in the *CGG Weekly* it is almost like a game—a ball game, a football game or some sporting event—that they are televising live with play by play from the announcers.

You can see all this destruction and carnage from the comfort of your living room. As one reporter put it, "It is like watching a movie, but real."

You've probably heard the news anchors and correspondents as they tell us everything that they know. They've been talking incessantly, especially the first few days, about the "shock and awe" part of this campaign; that we were going to go over there—the U. S. military—shooting cruise missiles off of ships, and whatnot (an overwhelming bombardment of Baghdad and other critical spots). Everybody was waiting for that; all the cameras were trained on Baghdad, and the reporters were ready.

We were going to sit back and watch this light and sound show as Baghdad came under bombardment.

Supposedly, that was to happen on the first day, but it didn't. We just had only 40 strikes at the one bunker where Saddam Hussein, and his two sons, and maybe some of the other Iraqi hierarchy were supposed to be having a meeting, or at least staying the night.

So we thought maybe it will happen the next day. But it didn't. They had a few bombs drop in.

And, then they said last Friday was the Shock and Awe. It was amazing to watch what happened Thursday night over into Friday morning. It really was.

I was in the office when the first things began to occur, and I watched some of it over a live feed over the Internet. Even on a little 2" x 3" screen and hearing it over my terrible speakers on the computer at real low sound it was jarring to witness.

Try to think about actually being there! I mean, if seeing it over this itty-bitty screen, and hearing it over low speakers was jarring, what was it like to actually be there in the neighborhood somewhere?

Who knows how many 1,000 lb. and 2,000 lb. bombs hit simultaneously to create those effects? Or in a rolling thunder pattern where they just crashed into whatever they were aiming for, one after another, after another, after another...blowing things up and setting things on fire; a cacophony of sound!

Even I, sitting at my desk, looking at this itty-bitty picture could almost feel the shock waves. It was just rumbling! And you know how sound is.

The only thing I know to compare this to is a few years back, my dad, and Ronnie Graham, Allie, and I went up to one of the NASCAR venues in North Wilkesboro, just north of Charlotte, NC, and this was the first NASCAR event that I had been to.

I should describe North Wilkesboro: It is a half-mile track, almost completely enclosed in bleachers, down in a bit of a hollow (a slight depression between two or three hills), so that every bit of sound moves through the bleachers.

And when those 43 cars started their engines simultaneously—*VROOOM!*—you felt it! It started at your toes, and worked all the way up right through your belly.

It was one of the most exhilarating sounds I had ever heard. (OK. I'm a NASCAR fan.) It was one of those things that just moved me because there was so much power; 750hp times 43 cars, all at the same time.

I've never experienced that again. The first time really made an impression on me.

Now I can just imagine not just 43 times 750hp, but dozens of bombs—who knows how many kilotons at a time—exploding in close proximity. It is hard to imagine.

It is hard to imagine the devastation that is being inflicted over there, not just structural, but human too. Who knows how accurate the reporting has been. Who knows how many lives were just wiped out, and all trace of those people burned up or snuffed out at once.

You can imagine. You've probably seen, heard, or read examples of what happened in Hiroshima, and Nagasaki where hundreds of thousands of people died—totally burned up never to be seen again. Some of them only scars on the pavement—shadows on the cement. A regular bomb can do the same thing if it lands right on top of you.

I wanted to help us understand what the Shock and Awe Campaign means. How it affects us.

If we're witnessing some of the breathtaking and destructive battles of the ongoing military campaign of the end-time, I'm very sure we're going to witness more instances of shock and awe.

Now, this military strategy has been around for a while. And the term, "Shock and Awe," as I understand, has been around since at least 1994 when one of the military thinkers formulated it on paper as part of the military strategy.

But, this time we were able to do the shock and awe type of bombardment. Whereas before the closest we had come would be something like "carpet bombing."

But now with all of our technology, we're able to do what they call "precision bombing." We can chart using a GPS (global-positioning satellite) exactly where we want that bomb to go. Or we use a laser to guide that bomb or missile in so that it hits exactly or in very close proximity to where we want it to go.

So, this shock and awe campaign, or tactic is fairly recent from the standpoint that we can do it so precisely. Whereas before, the bombing campaigns like in W.W.II, or Viet Nam, were just

massive bombings dropped from the sky.

But, no other nation in the world can display such might like America can. That shouldn't surprise us. We've been hearing a lot about that lately. But who knows who will be able to match it now that it is known. Once a thing is out of the bag, it can be copied and improved, and used, of course. And who knows where that will lead.

Are you aware that the Bible predicts a Final Shock and Awe campaign? It is for the time of the end which we hope, and dread, is just ahead of us. But, this will be a righteous and godly Shock and Awe campaign!

Of course, I'm speaking of the return of Jesus Christ.

It isn't quite the same as ours, but the effect it produces is the same but on a much greater scale. If we think we have seen shock and awe in Iraq, we ain't seen nothing yet!

Today, I would like to go into Jesus Christ's shock and awe campaign of biblical proportions.

Before we go into the actual return of Jesus Christ, I want to show you one occasion in history where this occurred. This was at Mount Sinai. So, if you will turn to Exodus 19 we will see the original shock and awe.

Exodus 19:16-20 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Now let's get Paul's rendition of this same occurrence which he puts into a New Testament context for us. I want to bookend this presentation with some advice and warning to help us prepare for the time to come.

Hebrews 12:18-21 For you [speaking to us spiritual Hebrews] have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, "I [Moses—the one closest to God] am

exceedingly afraid and trembling.")

Hebrews 12:25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks...

Not like the Israelites who said, "We don't want to hear! We don't want to hear!" *Listen*, he is saying! Keep your ears open to what God is saying! Don't refuse Him!

Hebrews 12:25-27 ... For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

And so the warning and advice to us is to make sure that we are building up those things that cannot be shaken, which the Hebrews unfortunately, were letting slip away.

Note the effects of God's presence! Not just in a shock and awe campaign at the end, but here in the giving of His law, and making a covenant with the people, as well as His, Christ's, present job as Judge of us. We're under the same situation, except in a spiritual sense. Paul is telling us that we're in God's presence, and we're in God's presence at all times, because He is in us, and we had better not refuse Him.

We need to understand that if we refuse Him now, we will be underneath the coming shock and awe campaign, rather than part of the victors who bring it.

Now God does not turn down the power and the volume. What we saw there in Exodus 19 is what we get. Stupendous noise of thunder, trumpet blasts, and (as Paul says) words being spoken, lightnings, thick clouds, earthquakes under our feet, fire and thick smoke ascending like from a furnace.

(If you think of some of those bomb blasts in the city of Baghdad, all you could see were these thick, black clouds of smoke pouring into the sky for hours after the bombs actually hit.)

And this (Exodus 19) was terrifying to everybody who saw it. The terror was calculated! God wanted it to produce terror! He wants us to understand His power and what He can do, and for us to be impressed by it so that we make it a motivation for change, for repentance.

We are supposed to be shocked and awed by God.

There are occasions of this in the Bible. For example, there is Isaiah 6, when Isaiah himself saw God, as well as Ezekiel 1, where some of these same sorts of descriptions are given. Like Isaiah said, he was completely undone. He felt like his whole body turned to jelly. You can't stand in the presence of God when He comes in shock and awe.

I want to move now to the return of Christ. Matthew 24 is as good as any place to begin. We will see prophecies of the coming campaign.

Matthew 24:21-31 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. [This is the worst time that will ever be upon the face of the earth.] "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*. "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. "See, I have told you beforehand. [Get ready! This is coming!] "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; *or* 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe *it*. "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles [vultures] will be gathered together. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Now, if anybody ever tells you that Jesus Christ has come, you can say, "Not on your life." We are going to know. Everybody is going to know. This portrayal—description—of Jesus' return let's us know that it will be quite similar to what happened on Mount Sinai, except it won't be localized to the Sinai Peninsula, but the whole world will be in great fear and trembling because the whole world will be experiencing these circumstances. The earth will be quaking under their feet. They will see the lightning flash through the sky. They will hear the trumpet blaring, growing louder and louder to announce His coming.

It says here that the heavenly signs will be apparent. All you have to do is look up and see the sun darkened, the moon will have a bloody look to it, stars falling from heaven.

You've seen shooting stars, but have you seen stars falling from heaven? I don't know what it is going to be like. But, it is going to be a terrific light show whatever it is.

We've seen some things that are awesome. But, when Christ returns we will all be dazzled, amazed, and utterly shaken. It won't be like a fireworks show on July fourth where we go, "Oooh," and "Aaah!"

As it says in Revelation, people will be crawling into caves, calling on the mountains to fall on them because it will be so distressful and devastating. They don't want to see this light show, because when Christ comes He wants everybody to know.

There is not going to be some secret rapture. This is going to be something that everyone will witness, everyone will see, everyone will know, no one will be able to say, "I couldn't see it. I

was here, or there," or whatever. They will all be able to hear it and feel it!

We will see later in Peter that everything is going to be rockin' and rollin' at this time.

All of this happens after the Great Tribulation—the time that God says is the worst time that has ever been. We've seen some of, or heard about some of the things like Cambodia, and Rwanda, and Sudan, and the Communist purges earlier in the last century; as mentioned earlier, Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and we all know about the Holocaust, and the things that Nazi Germany did. We can go on and on.

But, the inhumanity and suffering of the Great Tribulation will be even worse than that. And then, it will be followed by the Day of the Lord, which is worse still.

I want to go to Revelation 11 just to pick up one thing here. It is like a one-verse encapsulation of the things that happen on that Day. This is the seventh trumpet being blasted.

Revelation 11:19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

We will see (as we go through) that these same descriptors—these same ideas—keep coming back time and time, and time again to let us understand as much as we can about what the second coming of Jesus Christ is going to be like.

Matthew 24:28 "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together...[or in the AV., "where the body is..."]

This is an image of battle or of war. For where you see carrion birds circling, finally making their circle so small that they're coming right down on the carrion lying there on the ground, you know that there's been some sort of death. And if all the birds are gathered there for their fill, you know that there has been a huge battle. This is what is being shown here.

This is a time of utter total warfare. That's one way to look at this.

It tells us that Christ's return is not only a time of war, but is an aspect of war. He is coming as a conquering King; a General of armies; a Man of war.

Maybe we can see this best in Revelation 19. We will see the carrion imagery repeated a little bit later on.

Revelation 19:11-21 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white

horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Not only is it shock and awe, it is destruction like we have never imagined. The flesh of all people, it says, small and great. God comes back—Jesus Christ comes back—to wage war—a righteous war. A war that has been brewing for 6000 years because of mankind's hostility and rebellion to God.

By this time, God has had His fill of sin. He comes back and treads the winepress of His wrath. It says that the blood comes up to the horse's bridles. Can you imagine blood three or four feet deep flowing like a river?

Talk about shock!

Some people faint dead away when they see a little bit of blood. They can't take even that much. But, can you imagine a river flowing with blood through the valley of Jehoshaphat? Not a pretty picture.

Now we see here that just like in Iraq today, the enemy regime and all of its supporters must be removed before a new and better government can be installed.

In effect, God has to pretty much wipe the slate clean, and start over.

We see this same thing throughout the Bible. We're going to make a survey of many of the Old and New Testament scriptures about the Return of Christ, and we're going to see all these things repeated time and time again.

You know, we say that if God repeats things three times, we really ought to take notice? Well, we will see this is repeated dozens of times. God wants us to have a clear picture of what's in store for this world because of its rebellion.

Let's start in the Psalms. This is mild compared to what we get to later.

Psalm 2:6-9 Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations *for* Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."

Like I said, the Psalms are pretty mild compared to what we'll get to in the prophets.

Psalm 47:1-9 Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! [This is a Psalm of Praise.] Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the LORD Most High is awesome; [There is the awesome part.] He is a great King over all the earth. He will subdue the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet. He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves. [Think about this.] Selah. God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding. God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne. The princes of the people have gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted.

This last part basically means that God will subdue every power on this earth.

Psalm 110:1-7 The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! Your people *shall be* volunteers In the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth. The LORD has sworn and will not relent, "You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The Lord *is* at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill *the places* with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; therefore He shall lift up the head.

So, even the Psalms get into the act of showing the awesome might of Christ's return, showing that Christ's return is one of war and vengeance with great wrath. He is going to come with power to set things straight.

Isaiah 26:20-21 Come, my people [This is a warning to us], enter

your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will also disclose her blood, and will no more cover her slain.

The image of bodies just lying all around. It says in one place that it will take a great deal of time—maybe 7 years—for all the bodies to be found and buried. Such gruesome carnage.

Isaiah 42:13 The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up *His* zeal like a man of war. [Remember I mentioned that before.] He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.

There is no stopping the Lord as a mighty man of war when He decides to fight.

Isaiah 59:15-19 Then the LORD saw *it*, and it displeased Him [because what we had seen before in the previous verses were all these instances of sin.] that there was no justice. He saw that *there was* no man [no leader], and wondered that there was no intercessor; [Why doesn't somebody do something?] therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; the coastlands He will fully repay. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.

We're seeing the same sorts of things said over and over again about Christ's return.

Isaiah 63:1 Who *is* this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, [This is from the East of Israel.] this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?—"I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

That's the whole reason for His coming. He is trying to save. That's why His coming—why what He does—is righteous. It is the end result that He is looking toward. And this coming in power—shock and awe, and this great glory—is part of this. Like I said, it is calculated. It's necessary.

Isaiah 63:2-6 Why *is* Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come. [Who can stand it? A year of recompense. Wow!] I looked, but there *was* no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; and My own fury, it sustained Me. I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk in My fury, and brought down their strength to the earth."

Isaiah 66:14 When you see *this*,...

He had just spoken to the church basically from verse 5 all the way to verse 13. This was the imagery of a woman giving birth very quickly. It is given to us saying that when you see this happening...

Isaiah 66:14-16 ...your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like grass; the hand of the LORD shall be known to His servants, And His indignation to His enemies. For behold, the LORD will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, [We've heard that before, the great wind...] to render His anger with fury, [Notice the redundancy there. He's not only angry, He is furious. ] and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the LORD will judge all flesh; and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

This is a classic biblical understatement. It will be myriads upon myriads. It is gruesome to think about.

OK, to that wonderfully optimistic prophet—Joel, chapter 2. (Well, he does get optimistic at the end.)

Joel 2:1-2 Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations.

Joel 2:10-11 The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The

LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; who can endure it?

Joel 2:30-31 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

Sounds like part of what we saw in Exodus 19, as well as in Matthew 24.

Joel 3:9-12 Proclaim this among the nations: "Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords [that's backwards to what is said in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4] and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong.'" Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around [He's giving them an invitation to be slaughtered]. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD. Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

And now the winepress, and the reaping analogy comes in that we see in Revelation 14.

Joel 3:13-16 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, The vats overflow—for their wickedness is great." Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

In Joel, you see a lot of these things, almost all of them, come together in one narrative showing us just how terrible and awesome that time will be. All these things: war, judgment, heavenly signs, great noise, earthquakes; all these signal the return of Jesus Christ.

Even Haggai gets into the description here. Normally we don't think of Haggai in this way, but he says it twice!

Haggai 2:6-7 For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

Haggai 2:21-22 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: ` I will shake heaven and earth. I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. [Which is reminiscent of Zechariah 14.]

The way Haggai puts it here is godly shock and awe for sure. Notice how he writes this: "I will shake...", "I will overthrow...", "I will destroy...", "I will overthrow again..."

It is just like, Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! He's going to get it done. This is coming.

Malachi as well! This one, many believe, applies to His first coming, but it applies just as well to the second.

Malachi 3:1-3 Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? [No one can! You are either cowering in terror, or are on your knees in subjection, and submission to Him.] For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap. [He comes to refine, and to clean up!] He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness.

They will get it right this time.

Malachi 4:1 For behold, the day is coming, [Notice how often that is said. It's coming! It's coming! It's coming! Suddenly! In a short time!] Burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "that will leave them neither root nor branch.

Have you ever heard of a "scorched earth policy?" It is His earth. He can scorch it if He wants to. And, that's what He is doing to the people—the proud He says here. Stubble will be all that remains.

This is very serious. He takes so much of His Word to describe this over, and over, and over again. I've only gone to some of them. There's only so much time.

We really haven't gotten to the New Testament. There are three instances in the gospels alone where this is gone into in detail in the three descriptions of the Olivet Prophecy.

Let's skip over quite a bit, and go to II Thessalonians 1.

If you want an interesting little study, first and second Thessalonians are all about the return of Jesus Christ. Because, the question there was that somebody had convinced some there that the resurrection had already occurred.

And so Paul tells them at the end of every chapter, "No, it hasn't happened yet!" "Look! This is what is going to happen..." "This is what needs to be done." "This is what you need to be doing."

He talks about the coming of the Lord, with such-and-such will occur and then you will rise into the air to meet him, etc. etc.

OK. Here's the second epistle. We'll cut into the thought in verse 6 here.

II Thessalonians 1:6-10 Since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

Paul doesn't hold back either. He is like one of the Old Testament Prophets. He sure had an understanding of the Old Testament through all of his learning throughout his life. He knew those prophecies backwards and forwards. He distills it here in just a few verses. He talks about the flaming fire, the everlasting destruction, and the glory of His power. Which gives us an indication that we too, as New Testament Christians ought to understand what is coming in quite a bit of detail.

In the time that we have left, I want to go through a few scriptures that emphasize the speed of His coming, because that's important as well. Not just the shock, and awe, and fury, and flame, and the smoke, and the clouds, but it is coming fast. Faster than the cruise missiles come in and explode.

Zephaniah 1:7 Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand, for the LORD has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests.

They are the sacrifice! Or, the guests are the carrion fowl. And, they will eat the sacrifice.

Zephaniah 1:14 The great day of the LORD *is* near; it is near and hastens quickly.

Notice that redundancy! He's emphasizing the speed. It hastens quickly.

If you think of something hastening, it is coming pretty fast. But, it's not only hastening it is hastening quickly.

And then he goes into the normal description of that day.

Zephaniah 1:14-18 The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day *is* a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, [I think he must have gotten together with Joel.] A day of trumpet and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers. "I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, Because they have sinned against the LORD; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like refuse." Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD'S wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.

Shock, and awe, and speed!

Talk about having people set back on their heels. They will be flat on their backs when this occurs. It's going to come down like we can't even imagine.

I want to show you that Jesus, Himself, in a way echoes this. He says here in verse 29 of Mark 13 (in this whole section about the parable of the fig tree) that you are going to know when it is near, because the signs will be there for you to follow.

Mark 13:29 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!

Notice verse 32 and his caveat though. You will know when it is near...

Mark 13:32 But of that day and hour no one knows,

Get that! No one knows! So, if you or anybody else thinks they know, you have just sinned against God by calling Him a liar! He says, "No one knows!" Get that please!

Shock! Sudden! It hastens speedily! Quickly!

Mark 13:32 not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Do you know more than Jesus Christ? Only the Father knows. It is all in His hands as Sovereign of the universe. He's the Commander In Chief when He says go, the army goes. Shock and awe

on His command.

Mark 13:33-35 Take heed [Watch out!], watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. [This is the second time He has said this!] It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—

Three times in four verses He says that you do not know. Is that enough to convince us? Our Lord and Savior, Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, our High Priest, who is everything to us, tells us that we don't know. And will not know, at least down to the day and the hour.

Mark 13:35-37 "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning [It could be any time!]<sup>1</sup>—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

Don't get caught napping! It is going to come quick!

Paul echoes this too!

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

That's like the master coming home! Different image, but the same result. You don't know when a thief is going to come and burgle you. He goes on to say just that.

1 Thessalonians 5:3-6 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober.

Be serious about these things. Be self-controlled. Have your eyes on what is going on! Don't be deceived into thinking that you know everything about what is going to happen.

This is very important. It is said time and time again in the New Testament.

James 5:7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

James approaches this from the standpoint of patience. It is coming. Yes. Wait for it. Be patient. Don't jump the gun. You don't know the day or the hour.

James 5:8-9 You also be patient [He says it for the third time here.] Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

Is it like the Master coming home? Or like a thief in the night?

Are we going to patient? Are we going to be building character? Are we going to be nit-picking and sniping at one another so that we come under condemnation, rather than being in subjection to Christ?

He says, "Watch out! The judge is peering in at the latticework!" He knows what is happening inside His house. So, be ready!

Peter says something similar. He repeats the "thief in the night" imagery.

II Peter 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening [notice] the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

"Because you know these things are coming, you can be prepared," he says, "and even have a part in hastening it,"—speeding it up.

Remember, the fate of the world is in God's hands. He is the one that says, "Go!" And, when His church is ready, He'll send out the command and things will begin working to bring about the close of the age.

So, when will the number of those things be filled? When will He have gone through the midst of His people and put the mark on that separates them from everyone else?

Once that is done, then He'll go through and tell the angels, His armies and His Son to go

throughout and slay young and old, and start at my Temple. That's what we're waiting for.

In the last few minutes, let's skip through the book of Revelation. This makes it very immediate.

Revelation 1:1-3 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Let's go one chapter over. This is to the church at Pergamos.

Revelation 2:16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

Let's drop down to the 5<sup>th</sup> church at Sardis.

Revelation 3:2-3 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

Oooh! That's pretty bad. That's a very serious charge. You don't want to be spiritually dead when Christ returns. That's what he accuses the Sardis Church of. Being alive, yet dead. It says here basically that those who don't hear that warning will not know. They won't even have a clue.

To the church at Philadelphia:

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

We just heard a few minutes ago, that James said, "He stands at the door." And this time, in the church of the Laodiceans, He is outside the door knocking! That's how close He is!

Satan knows too!

Revelation 12:12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil

has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

Shouldn't we also know?

In the Armageddon section, Jesus interjects something in the flow here:

Revelation 16:15 Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches,

How many times does He have to tell us? "Look! I'm coming at a time that you are not going to know exactly, so be watchful."

Revelation 16:15 and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

Which is a reference back to the Laodicean. We're talking about this same time. Remember they were poor, blind and naked, as well as wretched, and miserable.

Revelation 22:6-7 Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Revelation 22:10 And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

Revelation 22:12 And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Do we need to be convinced that there is an urgency here in God's book about the coming of Jesus Christ? Yes, it is going to be shocking and devastating. It is going to be an awesome display of God's power.

There is going to be carnage like we've never even imagined. And it is coming fast and soon. It is our job to be ready.

I'd like to close, and let God's Word speak for itself.

Zephaniah 2:1 Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, Before the decree is issued....

Remember what I said. He has everyone's fate in His hands, and when He says go, that's when the armies go. That is what the decree is. The decree is for everything to be finished.

Zephaniah 2:2-3 Before the decree is issued, or the day passes like chaff, before the LORD'S fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you! Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger.