

2011 In Review The Year in Prophecy

By Ron Graff

Introduction

What an amazing year this has been for those who follow Bible prophecy. It is almost too much to summarize, but we will give it a try.

We are presenting the major prophecy issues of the year 2011 in ascending order of importance this year. One of the reasons for doing this is that the issues are becoming increasingly complicated, so we will show the shorter/ easier issues first and hopefully build the momentum it will take to give our serious attention to the longer articles.

Documentation for every aspect of this report may be found on the corresponding topic pages in Prophecy Central and Apologetics Central.

Scripture quotations are from the New International Version. Hypertext links to Scriptures are to the King James Version in the Blue Letter Bible.

10 - 2012 MAYAN CALENDAR/ APOCALYPSE?

Unfortunately, this may be the most popular prophecy-related topic, judging by the number of books that are available on the subject and the media attention it has received. However, like the many other kinds of non-biblical prophecy, such as astrology, the predictions of psychics, or the ancient writings of people like Nostradamus, these predictions are not to be taken seriously.

The Mayan Long Count calendar ends at the Winter Solstice in 2012. Their calendar is based on their excellent astronomical observations. According to Mayan historians, this calendar is like others. When the cycle ends, it starts over again. The idea of an apocalypse at that point was not evidently a part of their belief system.

The doomsday theories stem from a pair of tablets discovered in the 1960s at the archaeological site of Tortuguero in the Gulf of Mexico. They described the return of a Mayan god at the end of the 13th period.

Bible prophecy scholars do not put any stock in this theory. Neither do scientists from NASA. At Prophecy Central we do maintain a 2012 page where we will post interesting updates and link you to NASA.

9 - TECHNOLOGY

Smart Phones

The greatest technological story is the continued improvement of smart phones. In 2012 it is likely that more smart phones will be sold than personal computers. Researchers say they will continue to make incredible progress in the near future. Here are some of their predictions:

NFC – Near Field Communications – “Pay with your phone”

Some smart phones already have this feature that will not only allow the user to pay for things by waving the phone near the sales terminal, but also keep track of their financial transactions. Soon most or all new phones will have this capability, eventually making debit and credit cards obsolete.

LTE – Long Term Evolution - This is the description of newer, faster “generations” of mobile service (3G- 3rd Generation and 4G – 4th Generation – also called LTE Advanced).

GPU – Graphics Processing Unit – This is additional computing power that will enhance games, photos, video editing, and video phone service.

Multiple cameras and greater photo resolution – 12 megapixels, larger screens, and high resolution – 1280 x 720 pixels, and going up!

Multiple keyboards and voice recognition becoming more efficient – The current ability of some smart phones to recognize voice commands and respond to them verbally will advance to the point that the phone will become a personal assistant.

4-core processors next year and 8-core soon - Memory capability of 16 gigabytes is available now and it will grow as needed. More data storage will be going to “cloud” storage on the Internet.

Ability to process, store, print and transmit all necessary office documents and personal files.

Continued Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) functionality for mapping, navigation, even knowing where family members are.

More than a million helpful applications – free or relatively inexpensive

There are definite prophetic implications in this continued development of smart phones. Prophecy students know that in the End Times there will be a final evil world government with a dictator whom the Bible calls “The Beast.” At the midpoint of a seven-year period of tribulation, this despot will have an image of himself erected in the newly re-built Temple in Jerusalem, and he will require people to worship him and to receive the “Mark of the Beast” which one must have to be able to buy or sell anything.

The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to

worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. –
Revelation 13:15-17

The capabilities of smart phones, and some of problems they can cause, would make this economic dictatorship plausible.

Between smartphones and the exploding culture of social networking (Facebook, Google, etc.) there has been a loss of privacy for many users. Pictures taken with smart phones may be tagged with GPS data that can be shown as a street address. The unintended result is that strangers will know where the picture was taken.

It was also revealed recently that millions of smart phones have software installed that enables phone companies to track their every move - from place to place. It also transmits every keystroke and button press. What might never be known is what other secret “back door” features programmers will have included to allow invasion of our privacy.

There is an even bigger problem. Once the smart phone has all our personal data and becomes our universal commerce device, and maybe even has a large amount of money stored electronically, what will happen if we lose it? Would someone else be able to take over our finances and have access to all our secret information? Losing one's phone would be worse than losing one's or one's car. The solution will be to make the phone useless to anyone but its rightful owner. This could be done with a tiny Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) device implanted in the owner. Thus the smart phone would not work unless it was near its owner. Meanwhile, the phone could be located by its built-in GPS device. And what criminal would want to take the phone if he couldn't use it, and it leads the police to his door?

In the future, when the “Mark of the Beast” is instituted, people may be willing to have some small device installed that would only allow them to use their own smart phone.

See [Ron's Blog](#).

The Internet, e-books, and the Information Age

“But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.”
– Daniel 12:4

Amazon is now selling more e-books for its Kindle reader than it is selling traditional paperback books. Of course the iPad and other tablets are also

popular devices for reading e-books. In fact, smart phones will also handle them but the smaller screen is an obstacle for many readers.

A growing percentage of modern scholarship depends on access to the Internet. An incredible wealth of knowledge is available for free, and electronic versions of books are relatively inexpensive. Imagine what a loss it will be to those who do not receive the Mark of the Beast when they are cut off from the Internet. Will a Christian underground find another way to supply information to believers?

8 - NATURAL DISASTERS AND PLAGUES

Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven." (Luke 21:10-11)

Earthquakes and Tsunamis

Earthquakes and tsunamis have been a growing concern, especially since the startling destruction caused by the Indonesian tsunami in December of 2004. That earthquake had a magnitude of 9.0 and its tidal wave travelled at the speed of a jet airplane some 3000 miles, reaching Thailand, India, and even Africa. Approximately 330,000 people died.

The Haiti quake in January of 2010 measured 7.0, but because of poor building standards the toll of that quake may have been 250,000 (estimates vary greatly).

In March of this year people all over the earth watched in horror as the pictures of another great tsunami were shown on television. The tsunami followed a magnitude 8.9 quake in Japan, the largest in the country's history. The earthquake was so powerful that some areas of the Japanese city of Ishinomaki moved 17 feet to the southeast and sank 4 feet. Twice each day, at high tide, the city is flooded with knee-deep water. At the end of the year the toll stands at nearly 20,000 people dead or missing, and approximately 335,000 people still living as evacuees.

Studies released this year indicate that there is reason to believe that earthquake activity is increasing. Especially since the beginning of the new millennium, the number of major quakes has risen steadily.

In August there was a 5.8 temblor in the Virginia/ Washington D.C. area where earthquakes are rare. It was their largest quake in a century. It caused cracks in the Washington Monument, the National Cathedral, and many other buildings and historical sites.

Scientists blame the construction of dams for some of the increased earthquake activity. Globally, there are over 90 identified sites of earthquakes triggered by the filling of water reservoirs.

Extreme Weather and other "Fearful Events"

Fearful events and great signs from the heavens could include disastrous weather, modern threats, like asteroids, space junk, solar flares, and even UFO scares

Some years are worse than others in this area, but this year has been a serious eye-opener! Those who don't believe prophecy just chalk it up to global warming. On the other extreme, some Christians try to find a direct cause for every great storm or disaster. Of course we know that God could use (and sometimes has used) natural disasters as a punishment or a call to repentance. However, the Bible also teaches that *"He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous"* (Matthew 5:45).

New York experienced record snowfall in January and the warmest nights on record in July (84 degrees- July 22). A rare hurricane struck the city. The rest of the country also experienced catastrophic weather including hurricanes from the Gulf, the worst tornado season ever, uncontrollable fires in Texas, and 140 mph winds in Southern California. By the end of October, President Obama had declared a record-breaking 90 disasters in 2011. Twelve of these cost more than a billion dollars. What's more, the chief of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said that this year's disasters are "a harbinger of things to come."

The rest of the globe also had its share of harsh weather. There was a long-lasting flood in Australia that was twice the size of Texas. In Thailand, more than 600 people died from the extensive flooding. Their monsoon season was the worst they have experienced in over 50 years. AOL reported:

The floodwaters swamped entire towns as they moved south through the country's central heartland to Bangkok and the Gulf of Thailand. More than two-thirds of the country's 77 provinces have been flooded during the four-month-long crisis.

The Philippines also experienced intense flooding on the Island of Mindano. Typhoon Washi has claimed at least 1,079 people and more than 1000 others are still missing.

Sunstorms

Another threat may be coming to Earth sometime between 2012 and 2014 when the Sun reaches its so-called Solar-Max, or peak of its 11-year cycle of activity. If a Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) happens to release its explosive power directly toward Earth, the resulting electromagnetic fluctuations can cause failure of our power grids and satellites (including communications, GPS signals and aircraft navigation). It could take up to 10 years to repair the damage.

Famines and Pestilences

Starvation

A lack of food is the direct result of two prominent End-Times predictions: Wars and Natural Disasters. Famine is listed by Jesus as a sign of the times in the period leading up to the Tribulation. He said, "Nation will rise against nation, and

kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places." -Matthew 24:7

At the end of this year about 22,000 children die every day from malnutrition. Half of the people of the world live on less than \$2.50 per day. Their diet is plant based with wheat bread, corn or rice providing most of the calories.

There is a huge problem with hunger in Somalia, but analysts believe that this, and most other great famines, is less a product of drought, and more the result of corrupt or incapable politics.

The world-changing Arab Spring of this year began with a revolt against rising food prices. Our planet now has 7 billion people, and most of them are very poor.

According to the Book of Revelation famine will be even worse during the Tribulation Period (Revelation 6:5-6).

Radiation

The failure of Japan's Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant after their 9.0 earthquake and tsunami was an extremely serious development. Three reactors suffered core meltdowns. The accident was declared to be a "Level 7," which is the most severe stage, equal to the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in the former Soviet Union. Massive amounts of radiation were released into the atmosphere and sea water, and the surrounding cities have become a "no-man's land." It will take 30 to 40 years to fully decommission the reactors. Fortunately, no deaths are yet attributed to the radiation, but only time will tell how much cancer will result from the exposure.

Genetic Modifications

"Super-bugs" are diseases that have become resistant to medication. There are also new diseases for which there is no adequate cure. One such threat was the H5N1 virus, or "Bird Flu." Few humans contracted it because it was not airborne. However, Dutch scientists at Rotterdam's Erasmus Medical Centre have altered the genetic structure of this strain of avian influenza so that it is airborne. Thus, the disease may be spread by merely coughing or sneezing. The experiment is being called irresponsible because the disease is now potentially capable of killing millions of people. Researchers have been asked not to publish all the details of their discovery.

7 - APOSTASY OF THE CHURCH AND THE END TIMES REVIVAL

Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

– 2 Timothy 4:2-4

Every year it seems that the American Church as a whole slides a little further away from God's ideal for it. This is painful to observe, but is not surprising since the Bible has predicted this would happen in the End Times. Apostasy means "falling away." The Church is gradually losing its holiness and power. But the good news is that the Lord will most likely also send a great revival to the vast remnant of committed Christians who are praying, and to their younger generation, which has not yet seen the full glory of Jesus and his Church.

First, let us soberly consider some of the problems of the Church today.

Ignorance and Complacency

Church attendance in America has been declining for years, following the pattern of the Church in Europe. Megachurches seem to be thriving, but they gain attendance at the expense of the smaller churches that cannot offer such impressive programs. In fairness, it should be noted that some of these very large churches do faithfully teach God's Word, but the majority are not willing to teach anything controversial, including sound Christian doctrine and prophecy, and the consequences of sinful behavior.

Pollster George Barna, who has been taking the pulse of the Church for more than 20 years, issued another disturbing report. He discovered that only four people were named by more than 1 out of 50 adults as a most significant Christian leader. The names were Billy Graham, the Pope, Barack Obama and Joel Osteen. And 41% of the people were not able to name even one individual whom they consider to be an influential Christian.

Barna's group found that 50% of Americans believe that all people are eventually saved or accepted by God no matter what they do. They also discovered that the majority of 18- to 29-year-old Christians are interested in science or the arts, but most of them struggle to see how the Bible relates to their life's calling.

Chuck Colson comments on another of Barna's findings. America is filled with people who are do-it-yourselfers when it comes to religion... that only 7 percent

of those he surveyed say they believe in [seven essential Christian doctrines](#), as listed in the National Association of Evangelicals' Statement of Faith. Colson writes this,

“Okay, folks, we are experiencing a religious smorgasbord. Indeed, Barna says with just a hint of hyperbole that America may become a nation of ‘310 million people with 310 million religions.’”

Toleration of Evil

Gradually giving in to the postmodern concept of toleration, many churches do not take a strong stand against moral issues like abortion and homosexuality.

Abortion

Abortion was “front and center” in the many Republican debates among potential Presidential candidates. Basically, all of the serious contenders were against abortion, though some had moderated their stance to become more acceptable to the “Religious Right.” The corollary of this fact is that the majority of people who consider themselves Democrats may be church-goers, but it doesn’t affect their view of the sanctity of life.

Homosexuality

Teens and young adults have been leaving their churches for years. Many of them are rejecting the conservative politics of their fathers, perceiving that candidates are often hypocrites. They are influenced by postmodern thinking that posits a new concept of tolerance and leaves them with a dislike of controversy. Alex Mason of the Family Policy Network said, “They’ve bought into the lie that truth can be different for everyone, which often means they become unwilling to tell their homosexual friend that his behavior is immoral.

Unfortunately, many of these young people are being drawn into so called “emerging church” organizations and even some wavering Christian institutions of higher education that choose to ignore the Bible’s clear teaching about homosexuality (Genesis 19:1-26; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9- 11; 1 Timothy 1:10). What church leaders need to do is not to present homosexuality as worse than other sins, but to show that, like other sins, it must be confessed and overcome by God’s grace.

In May the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted to approve a change to the church's constitution that will allow the denomination's 173 presbyteries to ordain persons without regard to sexual orientation.

Willow Creek Community Church known as the most influential church in America, has broken ties with Exodus International, the world’s largest ministry that reaches out to homosexual. There is a disappointing trend in the Christian community, with churches and other groups shying away from controversial issues -- like homosexual outreach.

Several states now allow same-sex marriages. In California a popular initiative was passed three years ago to specify that marriage was between one man and one woman, but the courts called the law unconstitutional. Meanwhile California has become the first state requiring public school textbooks to include the accomplishments of lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals and transvestites (LGBT).

Theological Confusion

During the year emerging church pastor Rob Bell released the book, *Love Wins*. It suggests that the redemptive work of Jesus may be universal — meaning that, as his book's subtitle puts it, "every person who ever lived" could have a place in heaven, whatever that turns out to be. The book has met with fierce criticism from the Evangelical community, igniting a new holy war in Christian circles. and Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, says Bell's book is "theologically disastrous."

End Times Revival

God may send a wake-up call to our generation. The Book of Jonah tells the story of a "last chance" for the evil city of Nineveh. Jonah didn't even want to invite them to believe, but he was forced to preach there, and to his amazement, they experienced repentance and revival (Jonah 3).

Missions

Christianity is the world's largest religion and it is still growing rapidly in developing countries. One of the exciting new developments in missions recently is an emphasis on the "4/14 Window." Luis Bush, who coined the expression 10/40 window to describe the geographical target of missions, now offers a free booklet that extols the advantages of paying attention to the 4/14 window. The new focus is on reaching the 1.2 billion children and young people with the Gospel during their most impressionable years.

Another exciting example of church growth in the world of missions is the new ministry of Multiplication Networks, an organization that mobilizes local Christians in various countries to literally plant hundreds of new churches.

The Call

Lou Engle and his associates mobilize tens of thousands of Christians – mostly young people to fast and pray for repentance for our national sins and revival in these days.

Shroud of Turin

After years of skepticism and a tentative verdict that the famous Shroud of Turin dated from the medieval period, and therefore could not have been the cloth that

wrapped the body of Christ, a new set of experiments have shown that it is most likely authentic after all. The basic conclusion of the recent study is that the technology that would have been needed to produce the shroud only partially exists today, and certainly would not have been available in the medieval period. Furthermore, we still do not understand what could have produced the image on the cloth, lending credence to the belief that it was caused by radiation at Christ's resurrection. This might be a powerful reminder to our generation that the story of Jesus is true!

Noah's Ark Found?

Another great proof to a doubting age that the Bible is true might come in the form of discoveries about Noah's Ark. A team of explorers led by Daniel McGivern has used satellite imagery and ground penetrating radar technology to identify what they believe is the remains of Noah's Ark near the top of Mount Arafat in Turkey.

"The mountain is treeless. The mountain is volcanic with gases. There is no conceivable way that you could have an object that big on a mountain," McGivern said.

This is not the first time people have thought they have found the Ark. But if it is validated it would become the greatest tourist attraction on earth and a last-days encouragement for people to believe the Bible

Muslims Have Dreams of Jesus

The greatest mission field is the Islamic world with more than a billion people, who, for the most part, have not heard the Gospel of Jesus. In most Islamic countries it is illegal or very difficult to witness to these people. Amazingly, there are hundreds of stories now being told of Muslims who have had dreams or visions of Jesus. The Bible is full of dreams and visions of great prophetic importance. The Apostle Paul had a vision of Jesus on the Damascus Road, and was instantly converted. We expect more divine intervention to bring Muslims to Christ.

*"And afterward,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days." – Joel 2:28-29*

6 – ECONOMIC MALAISE

Economic trends have a strong influence in shaping the development of national and international affairs. Prophecy students are expecting the emergence of an End Times world government which will not necessarily be led by the United States. The troubled world economy will make people willing to accept the control of a governmental system or even a benevolent dictator who appears to have the ideas and influence to improve the situation.

World-wide economic problems

The economy started in the doldrums this year, and like the old saying, "If it weren't for bad news there wouldn't be any news at all."

The economic situation was made even worse by the "Arab Spring" protests and the fighting and instability that came from it. CNN reported that the protests were creating a toxic financial environment, with businesses and banks closed, fuel supplies disrupted, and investors afraid to help.

Runaway debt in the United States

Irresponsible government spending has increased our debt to nearly \$15 TRILLION dollars. Financial experts say that it is not possible to repay that debt without giving in to hyperinflation. For the first time in memory our national credit rating has dropped to an unfavorable level.

The stock market gyrates wildly, adding to the confusion about how serious the recession or depression is in our country. The home market is still depressed. The middle class is becoming poorer while the rich get richer.

Confidence in government is at an all-time low, and it is no wonder when a March report from the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) reveals hundreds of billions of dollars in waste. And as far as we can see, no remedy has been made by Congress.

In one day (August 5, 2011) the Dow Jones Industrial Average plummeted 512.76 points, or 4.31 percent... The last time the Dow dropped more than 500 points in a single session was in Dec. 2008.

Financial Crisis in Europe

Bad economic news in the U.S. also affects the rest of the world, and vice-versa. We are caught in a downward spiral. In September The president of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick commented on the situation, saying that the world's economy "is in a danger zone."

The situation is affecting the unity of the European Union and the viability of the Euro.

Push toward Global Governance

If any one issue in the world today could cause people to be willing to accept a political messiah, it would be our economic plight. Nevertheless it was shocking to read reports in October's New York Times that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace proposed an overhaul of the world's financial systems, and a supranational authority to oversee the global economy. It claimed that the marketplace has run amok because of a lack of democratic and ethical principles.

It is interesting that a 2009 Time Magazine article had featured a similar story entitled, "The Vatican's Radical Ideas on Financial Reform." The story said that Pope Benedict XVI had issued an encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, in which he argued that there is "an urgent need of a true world political authority" to address problems of economic inequality both within and between countries.

The Book of Revelation tells us that the coming evil world dictator, "The Beast," will assume complete financial control of the world at the mid-point of the Tribulation.

¹⁵ The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. ¹⁶ It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

¹⁸ This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666. – Revelation 13:15-18

Of course, the economy may get better or worse in the future, but it is certainly not difficult to imagine a time when a supposedly benevolent dictator would be given such power if he just had the plan to fix the economy.

5 - WARS AND RUMORS OF WAR

According to Matthew 24:6, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come."

Wars have always been a big factor in world history. Even so, Jesus predicted that in these End Times military conflict will increase. In his [Olivet Discourse](#) he identified four phases of the future: "The Beginning of Birth Pains," "The Tribulation," "The Great Tribulation," and "After the Tribulation."

According to many Prophecy scholars we are living in the first phase: "The Beginning of Birth Pains." Jesus said there would be certain signs accompanying this period of time. One of them is "wars and rumors of war." Perhaps he was referring to the two terrible world wars, the development of nuclear weapons, and the many smaller conflicts.

Actually, these last six of the top ten prophecy stories are all war-related. This one is about the awful extent of general warfare in the world. The rest of the stories are about specific major conflicts. All of these have prophetic implications.

[GlobalSecurity.com](#) lists 42 current wars, most of which the average person knows nothing. Twenty of them are considered major conflicts. Some have been going on for more than half of a century.

It would take a thick book to give all the details about military activity in the world during 2011. We will just give a summary of some of the major movements

US Military buildup – World Police

Unfortunately, the United States has assumed the role of "world police force." Many conflicts that do not affect us directly still draw us in to protect our allies or even economic interests. These wars are extremely costly, both in terms of finances and, even worse, in terms of the lives of young American soldiers.

In addition, the FBI has determined that there is virtually a 100% chance that our country will be hit with a weapon of mass destruction at some point. Dr. Vahid Majidi, the FBI's assistant director in charge of the FBI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate, says that when such an attack does take place, it will most likely employ chemical, biological, or radiological weapons rather than a nuclear device.

Three years ago a special Congressional commission warned the House Armed Services Committee that the U.S. is in danger of a catastrophic nuclear attack. Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and terrorists either have, or will soon have the

ability to deliver and detonate one nuclear bomb at high altitude (25 to 250 miles above the Earth). The immediate effect of such an explosion would be the disruption of, and damage to, electronic systems and electrical infrastructure. Other related services would fail as a result.

This year The Department of Energy and the states of Maryland and Florida held emergency response exercises to determine their readiness if national electric power grid should fail.

In October the military said that "Ray Guns" are actually being developed. They look like radar devices and are called active electronically scanned arrays (AESA). When acting as a normal radar, an AESA broadcasts its microwaves over a wide area. At the touch of a button, however, all of its energy can be focused onto a single point. If that point coincides with an incoming missile or aircraft, the target's electronics will be zapped.

In November the Pentagon announced its new "bunker-busting bomb." The 30,000-pound "massive ordinance penetrator" (MOP) is made by Boeing for the B-2 and B-52 bombers. "It gives us a far greater capability to reach and destroy an enemy's weapons of mass destruction that are located in well protected underground facilities." Pentagon Spokesman Capt. John Kirby said. The new bomb may be 10 times as powerful as the ones formerly used for this purpose.

China's Military Buildup

The dramatic growth of China in our generation is often ignored in prophetic calculations. China is not a traditional foe of Israel, and had not been considered a major threat to the End Times world empire until recently. It is the most populous nation on Earth, and recently has made a huge impact on world affairs.

China is involved in a massive military build-up that threatens Taiwan, South Korea, and other Asian countries. It will also be a participant in the Battle of Armageddon, as one of the "Kings of the East" that will cross the dried-up Euphrates River to join the campaign (Revelation 16:12).

About a year ago China announced "initial operational capability" for its Dong Feng 21D "aircraft carrier killer" missile.

In January China introduced its new stealth fighter that could pose a significant threat to American air superiority. It is likely that they copied US technology to produce the plane.

In July it was discovered that China is apparently developing electromagnetic pulse weapons (EMP) for use against U.S. aircraft carriers in future conflicts over Taiwan. The arms are part of China's so-called "assassin's mace" arsenal of weapons that allow a technologically inferior China to defeat U.S. military forces.

By August China was able to deploy their first aircraft carrier. The 990 ft. carrier is a refitted former Soviet warship. It will take years to fully deploy the ship's military capabilities.

Also in August, as the Palestinians were asking the United Nations to grant them statehood, Chinese President Hu Jintao surprised the U.S. by telling Mahmoud Abbas that they will support the move. He wrote to Abbas that China has, "always supported the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state."

Toward the end of the year, Sir Max Hastings, a British journalist, editor, historian and author, wrote an article entitled, "Will World War III Be between the U.S. and China?" He recalled the tensions between the two superpowers during the Korean War, ending with a peace agreement and the armistice line that still divides the two Koreas today. Since then the U.S. has maintained strategic dominance over the Indo-Pacific region, but China has become an economic powerhouse, and is now building a military force that could lead to conflict again.

China also appears to be extremely active in the area of cyber war that is discussed below.

North Korea

North Korea was identified as far back as George W. Bush's presidency as part of an evil axis – North Korea- Iran- and Iraq. There has still been animosity between the two Koreas since 1953. North Korea developed nuclear warfare capabilities in 2006, and has apparently helped Iran and Syria in their nuclear ambitions.

In February former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said he was worried about the threat from an electromagnetic pulse attack from countries such as Iran and North Korea.

In November it was revealed that North Korea is apparently building its first road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missile. They already have large stationary missiles, but the new weapons are mobile and easy to hide. Their missiles could reach the U.S., but we apparently do not have an adequate missile defense system to guard against such an attack.

On Dec. 19th North Korean leader Kim Jong-il has died of a heart attack and one of his sons, Kim Jong-un was confirmed as his successor. This development adds even more uncertainty to the future of this unstable regime.

Multinational talks aimed at disarming North Korea have been deadlocked for months.

Problems with Pakistan

Pakistan is also a nuclear nation – the only Islamic country so far to have this capability. They have been a fragile partner with the U.S. in the War on Terror and an impediment to our relationship with India.

Assassination of Bin Laden

In May United States Navy SEALs successfully carried out a surprise attack against Osama bin Laden in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad near a military base. Bin Laden's body was buried at sea before others could enshrine it somewhere on land. Pakistan was shocked and embarrassed by the feat. They also wanted to see Bin Laden brought to justice, but felt violated by the surprise attack. They allowed the Chinese to inspect a broken stealth helicopter that was left at the site.

Support to Afghanistan Halted

In November NATO forces accidentally struck a military checkpoint at a crossing point between Pakistan and Afghanistan, killing 24 Pakistani soldiers. The immediate response by angry Pakistani leadership was to close both roads into Afghanistan, cutting off NATO supply lines and leaving convoys of supplies stranded inside Pakistan. They also ordered the U.S. to "vacate" an air base used for suspected drone attacks

Cyber Warfare

At the end of last year the mysterious "Stuxnet computer worm" apparently incapacitated one-fifth of Iran's centrifuges, setting back their nuclear timetable by several years. In January Meir Dagan, - Israel's retiring chief of the Mossad intelligence agency, all but admitted that the virus was developed by U.S. and Israeli experts. It was the first case of a computer virus being able to affect a specific target in this way.

By midyear the United States suffered a number of major cyber-attacks. In July hackers from an unknown source stole thousands of sensitive files from the Pentagon's "most sensitive systems," forcing the government to begin development of a defensive plan that would treat cyberspace in a similar manner to land, air, and sea.

In August, the world's most extensive case of cyber-espionage occurred, attacking some 72 networks -- 49 of them in the U.S. -- were infiltrated, resulting in a massive loss of information. Some of the networks affected were the United Nations secretariat, a U.S. Energy Department lab, some dozen U.S. defense firms and a U.K. defense contractor. Analysts believe that the attacks came from China.

A November incident apparently originating in Russia took control of a water control station in Illinois and cycled a pump until it burned out. The intruders could evidentially have caused much more damage if they had wanted to.

In December a group of hackers in China breached the computer network of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, gaining access to everything stored on its systems, including information about its three million members.

Future Wars

There will be other wars in the future, including the war of the Second Seal ([Revelation 6:3-4](#)), the Beast's campaign to rule the world ([Revelation 13:5-8](#)), the Battle of Armageddon([Revelation 19:11-21](#)), and Satan's Last Stand ([Revelation 20:7-10](#)) after the Thousand Year Reign of Christ.

4 - UNSUCCESSFUL END TO AMERICAN CONFLICTS

Osama bin Laden

Americans were told on May 2 that our most targeted enemy, Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of the September 11, 2001 attacks, had been killed by an elite force of U.S. Navy SEALs, who invaded his fortress in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Iraq

In October President Obama announced that all 41,000 remaining U.S. troops would be pulled out of Iraq before the end of the year. Conservatives were distressed by the fact that such an abrupt and complete pull-out would lead to political instability in the country.

Unfortunately the decision was forced by Iraq's Shi'a Muslim leader Muqtada al-Sadr's warning that the U.S. soldiers must leave or face "resistance."

On December 15th Defense Secretary Leon Paneta led a simple ceremony at the Baghdad airport to officially end the Iraq war. By December 20th the US withdrawal was completed, ending nearly nine years of war.

As soon as U.S. troops departed from Iraq, serious political fighting began. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, who is a Shi'ite, asked parliament for a no-confidence vote against Saleh al-Mutlaq, a Sunni who is deputy prime minister, on the grounds that he lacked faith in the political process. Meanwhile a 5-judge panel banned Sunni Vice-President Tareq al-Hashemi from leaving the country while they investigate charges that he is a terrorist.

Three days later at least 69 people were killed and some 200 were injured in a wave of bombings in Baghdad. They targeted markets, grocery stores, cafés and government buildings in a dozen neighborhoods. An Al Qaeda front group in Iraq claimed responsibility for the wave of attacks. The terrorists took credit on the Internet. The issue is the sectarian struggle between Shite and Sunni Muslims that caused their civil war years ago. The attackers are unhappy with the country's Shiite-dominated leadership that has been allowed to come to power as a result of the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Many Americans think the rapid withdrawal was unwise, and doubt that the effort was worth the lives of more than 4,400 U.S. troops, the death of as many as 112,000 Iraqis and the nearly \$1 trillion dollar price tag for the fighting and rebuilding of the nation.

Afghanistan

Near the beginning of the year President Obama announced plans to begin troop withdrawals in Afghanistan. Critics warn that the same sort of thing that has happened in Iraq will occur in Afghanistan if the withdrawal is too abrupt.

There are no clear references to a country like America in the line-up of End Times nations, prompting many teachers to suggest that our country will have lost much of the strength and prestige that it once enjoyed.

3 - ISRAEL/PALESTINIAN CONFLICT (PEACE PROCESS)

For many years the world has been waiting for the relief of a peace pact between Israel and the Palestinians. Without such an agreement, hostilities keep festering in the Middle East and spilling over to the rest of the world in the form of terrorism.

*They dress the wound of my people
as though it were not serious.
'Peace, peace,' they say,
when there is no peace. – Jeremiah 6:14*

The lack of peace is caused by the civil struggle between the government of Israel and the Palestinian people who want to establish a separate Palestinian state. Most of the Arab and/or Islamic nations in the area are also involved. The United States, the U.N., the European Union, and even Russia are all trying to broker peace in the region.

At the beginning of this year two very important developments complicated the already-difficult process of achieving peace in the region. The first of these was a decision by the Palestinians to seek direct recognition as a separate state from the United Nations. They announced their intention to do so in January and set the month of September as the target for their action. This would presumably leave time for Israel to show their willingness to achieve peace before that deadline. Israel did make peaceful overtures during the year and reaffirmed their commitment to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State if the two parties could work out the details. The so-called "Quartet" of peace negotiators (The U.S., United Nations, European Union and Russia) also showed their willingness to restart direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians. However, as the year progressed, the Palestinians became more focused on the UN request and less focused on discussions with Israel.

The second major development was the "Arab Spring," a series of protests in surrounding Middle Eastern nations. This phenomenon began in Tunisia on January 18th. It spread to Egypt just one week later and to other countries within a few more weeks. It was a revolt of mostly poor people against the dictatorial regimes of corrupt, high-living dictators. Most unexpectedly, these protests were fanned by the use of social networks, especially by Facebook messages that called the disturbed people to amass in certain places, like Cairo's Tahrir Square. Egyptians came by the thousands, and eventually by the hundreds of thousands to clamor for the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. He gradually turned over control to the country's military, and was forced to resign some time later. In ill health and disgrace, Mubarak was charged in May to stand trial for the premeditated murder of peaceful protestors.

At the end of the year his trial is still in process. If he is convicted, he could face the death penalty.

The “Arab Spring” spread to Yemen, bringing about the resignation of their Prime Minister, and to Libya where a brutal civil war eventually brought down the 42-year dictatorship of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Gaddafi tried to the end to resist the uprising, but was finally caught, beat, and shot by the opposition. NATO air strikes were used to bolster the opposition, but critics warned that the US and European nations may regret enabling unknown leaders who are probably radical Islamists to take over the country.

Over time, there were also major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, and Syria. The Syrian situation has become very severe, and continues past the end of this year. UN reports claim that more than 5,000 people, mainly protesters, have been killed, and thousands have been imprisoned. The actions of the Syrian government has been condemned by all observers, but the regime of President Bashar al-Assad does not yet appear to be willing to give in to the protestors.

These major changes in countries surrounding Israel, and especially the situation in Egypt, put Israel on alert status. It was possible that the long-standing peace agreement between Israel and Egypt could be nullified. In February Gabi Ashkenazi, the outgoing Chief of the Israel Defense Forces, warned that Israel must be prepared to conduct war in several different theaters. He also said that the radical camp in the Middle East is gaining strength while the traditional Arab leadership is weakening.

In March Palestinian Hamas militants conducted their strongest attack against Israel in two years, firing dozens of mortars into southern Israel. Hamas and other terrorist groups were thought to have at least 10,000 missiles and rockets. Israel retaliated with air strikes in Gaza City and militant training camps.

Israel quelled the Hamas rocket attacks by striking back decisively, and because of the success of its new “Iron Dome” missile defense system. The Iron Dome's debut on the battlefield intercepted 100 percent of the longer-range Grad-type missiles launched

By April, while still fighting with Hamas, Israel was also being threatened again by Hezbollah from the North. The terrorist group that is aligned with Syria and Iran had quadrupled its bunkers in Lebanon and had more than 40,000 rockets and missiles aimed at nearby population centers in Israel.

By June Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas claimed that he would still prefer to have direct talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu than to ask the UN to declare Palestine a separate state without a peace agreement with Israel. But in August he had adopted a belligerent tone toward

Israel and criticized the International Quartet for urging him to agree that Israel is a Jewish state. He said, "Don't order us to recognize a Jewish state. We won't accept it."

At the end of August, just before the official launch of the Palestinian's UN statehood campaign, China surprised the world by publicly endorsing the concept. A letter was sent from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to the Secretary General of United Nations to "exert all possible efforts toward the achievement of the Palestinian people's just demands." Abbas spoke to the UN General on May 23. During that speech he expressed strong anti-Israeli sentiments. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was then given the opportunity to speak. He said that the Palestinians want to have a state without first establishing peace. He added, "I came here to speak the truth. The truth is that Israel wants peace. The truth is that I want peace. The truth is that Israel wants peace with the Palestinians, but they want a state without peace, and the truth is you shouldn't let that happen."

Some individual countries have offered recognition to Palestine and some UN offices display the Palestinian flag, but as of the end of the year Palestinians do not yet have the 9 votes needed on the UN Security Council to pass the resolution that would give them UN status as an independent state. Even if they eventually gain the votes the U.S. has the power to veto it.

In October the Middle East Quartet said that they will try to restart peace negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian representatives in the coming days. Mark Regev, spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that Israel is ready to participate immediately.

Meanwhile, throughout the year there has been intense activity in Iran toward their ultimate goal of producing nuclear weapons, accompanied by serious saber-rattling between nations. It appears that either Iran or Israel could initiate a sudden strike against the other, and the question naturally arises, will such a conflagration draw the United States into this war? Only time will tell.

The other major question raised by Iran's current course of action is what will happen to the other oil-rich countries in the Middle East? That is why King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia has formally called for the formation of a Gulf Union - a super state in the region. The implied reason for the union would be strength against their rival Iran. Such an alliance would include Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, and it could eventually add Jordan, Morocco and Egypt. If such a super state were to become a reality it might even attract Syria and Lebanon into its fold and the super state would then surround the borders of Israel.

The current wave of violence could die out and become one of many such cycles in the area, or it could lead to more serious war. On the other hand, the outcome of this war could be a most welcome peace agreement.

Such a peace agreement might be just another phase in the age-old struggle between these nations, or it could be the false peace mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. *While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.* (NIV)

When Israel finally is at peace, it will be the first time since they became a nation in 1948 that they have enjoyed such security. This could cause them to lower their guard, which would set the scene for yet another war, such as the one predicted in Ezekiel 38 and 39. (Many good Bible teachers think that war is more likely at the end of the Tribulation, but it does not correspond exactly to the Battle of Armageddon.) If it does come before the Tribulation, it will most likely correspond to the 2nd Seal of Revelation 6.

The dramatic end of this great war of the 2nd Seal could produce the treaty predicted in Daniel 9:27, which many prophecy scholars identify as the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period.

2 - ARAB SPRING AND ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Another significant prophecy development was the series of Arab protests leading to the overthrow of several Middle East regimes. It started in Tunisia in January and spread next to Egypt. One surprising factor in the huge turnout in Cairo was the use of Facebook to spread the word and invite protesters to the developing crowd in Tahrir Square. After 17 days of protesting, President Hosni Mubarak stepped down, turning the reins of government over to the military until the country could have elections.

The unseating of corrupt leaders, brought hope that these countries would gain a better, more democratic government. Middle Eastern experts, however, warned that just under the surface of these uprisings were groups like the Muslim Brotherhood that most people thought were small in number and influence, but were actually poised to provide aggressive new leadership. And that leadership would be a major step toward Islamic fundamentalism – meaning a return to sharia law, intolerance of other religions, and animosity toward Israel.

The Truth about the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood had existed since 1928, shortly after the end of World War I and the abolition of the Ottoman Empire. According to Middle East expert Walid Shoebat its sole purpose was the resurrection of the Caliphate.

The Obama administration assured Americans that the Muslim Brotherhood was not a danger. It is clear in retrospect that representatives of the brotherhood had infiltrated policy-making organizations in the U.S., U.K. and France so that there was support for their cause instead of caution.

There were protests in other Arab nations, including Libya and Syria.

The revolutionary spirit spread to Yemen and then Libya where Colonel Muammar Gaddafi had reigned as a virtual dictator for many decades. His government's treatment of the protesters was excessive, and civil war began against the militants from various tribal groups in Libya who saw their chance to get rid of Gaddafi. The protestors asked for, and received air support from NATO to keep the Libyan military from crushing their movement. After months of bloody fighting Gaddafi was flushed out, beat, and shot to death by the opposition. Again, the new leaders that rose to the occasion were also Islamic fundamentalists.

The protest fever continued to grow, eventually reaching Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Oman.

Protests were slow to start in Syria, but once they did, they continued for months, even though Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime was brutal in its dealings with their dissidents and it is not yet clear what the outcome will be there. Syria has a different inclination than most other Islamic countries because of their close relationship with Iran.

Understanding Islam

Christians need to affirm their love for Muslims (Christ died for all men), and stand against any persecution against them based on their religion or ethnicity. We should also seek to enter into dialog with them where possible, so that they might learn more about Jesus, whom they respect as a prophet, but do not accept as savior. At the same time, we should be entirely opposed to the wanton murder of innocent people by terrorists. And we should not give the false impression, so prevalent in our culture today, that our beliefs are equal. Jesus said He is the only way to God the Father (John 14:6).

Radical Islam has continued to grow. Their aim is to control the world. Intelligence experts warn that another great attack is likely in America. Few Muslim mosques stand effectively against violence. Instead, they tend to serve as places of recruitment for jihadists. Outdated immigration policies and weak border control allow the continued flow of trained terrorists into our country. Americans and their leaders need to wake up and find ways to stop this trend before it is too late for us. (Opening statement on Prophecy Central's Islam page)

Differences between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims

Iraq and Afghanistan – both countries that have been subdued and supposedly rehabilitated by the U.S. since the beginning of the War on Terrorism – are deeply divided between the two major sects of Islamic belief.

Most people don't really care about the differences between these branches of Islam and are not willing to go to the effort of learning about them. This is unfortunate because understanding the world in which we are living requires at least a basic concept of Islam and its major divisions.

The majority of Muslims are Sunni (80 to 90%). Shia (Shite) Muslims are the minority (5 to 20%).

The original difference between the two groups is their concept of the line of authority descending from Muhammad. It is a primarily political distinction but

they have accumulated some religious differences over time. About.com gives this introduction:

The division between Shia (Shi'ite) and Sunni dates back to the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and the question of who was to take over the leadership of the Muslim nation. Sunni Muslims agree with the position taken by many of the Prophet's companions, that the new leader should be elected from among those capable of the job.

The Sunni (from a related Arabic word that means "one who follows the traditions of the Prophet.") accepted the first four Caliphs, starting with Muhammad's friend Abu Bakr, as the rightful successors to lead the Muslim nation. Sunnis accept the writings of these official Caliphs, known as the Hadith ("traditions" of the Prophet's life and spiritual practice). Osama bin Laden was a Sunni Muslim as are the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Shia (shortened form of the Arabic "Shia-t-Ali" - "The Party of Ali") believe that the rightful successor was the prophet's cousin/son-in law, Ali. Ali and the leaders who followed him were all supposed to have been appointed by either the Prophet Muhammad or Allah himself). There were twelve of these leaders or Imams. Many Shia today are known as "Twelvers" because they believe the Twelfth Imam went into hiding and will return as a messiah at the End of Days. The Shia reject the Hadith and only follow the Qur'an (Koran). Iran's Ayatollah and their President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are Shia Muslims.

Predominately Sunni Areas (Many countries in each area)

Africa - Including recent countries in the news: Egypt, Libya

Arab world - Including recent countries in the news: Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria

South Asia - Including recent countries in the news: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey

Predominately Shia (Shi'ite) Countries

Azerbaijan

Bahrain

Iran

Iraq

The Muslim population in Lebanon is about half Sunni and half Shi'ite.

Calls for a Caliphate

A Caliph is the ruler of the Islamic world. The last caliphate was the Ottoman Empire, which was disbanded at the end of World War I. There are calls for unity among Muslims emanating today from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran and Turkey. If a new Islamic caliphate were to emerge, it would certainly seek to include the

European countries where Muslim culture is becoming predominant. Such a coalition would resemble the old Roman Empire at its greatest extent, and could be what was predicted in Daniel, chapter 2, where it depicts the final world empire, symbolized by iron [Rome] and clay [Islamic Caliphate?]/

⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. ⁴¹ Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. ⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. ⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. – Daniel 2:40-43

Tablighi Jamaat

During the coming year Prophecy Central will explore the popularity and influence of another major movement within the Islamic world known as Tablighi Jamaat (TJ).

1 - THE WAR OF GOG AND MAGOG

This is the war of Ezekiel 38 and 39. We relate it to the war of the Second Seal in Revelation 6:3-4, a major conflict near the beginning of the Tribulation Period. Some respected scholars apply it to The Battle of Armageddon later in the Book of Revelation.

According to Ezekiel 38:1-4, an alliance of enemies will attack Israel in the End Times. The leader will be Gog of the land of Magog (Russia). He is assisted by Persia (Iran), Cush (Ethiopia), Put (Libya), Gomer, Beth Togarmah and other nations (possibly Turkey and/or other Islamic nations like those that were once part of the Soviet Union). Most of these names are listed in the genealogies of Genesis 10.

God will bring a quick end to this future war. He may use literal fire and brimstone, as in the days of Sodom, or he might pit nation against nation, the way he often did in the Old Testament, to precipitate a nuclear exchange.

And with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him;

The most consistently alarming drama of 2011 from a prophecy perspective has been the threats and counter-threats between Israel and Iran. Iran claims that its nuclear program is only for the purpose of generating electricity. Intelligence from many sources indicates that they are bent on producing nuclear weapons as soon as possible. In November the United Nations watchdog organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which normally waits too long to sound the alarm, issued a warning that Iran is indeed on track to have their own atomic arsenal in the near future. .

Iranian president Mahmud Ahmadinejad has said for years that Israel needs to be wiped off the map. And unlike the political dynamics of the past that kept the U.S. and Russia from destroying each other, he and Ayatollah Khamenei are expecting the Twelfth Imam, the Islamic Mahdi, to appear soon to bring order to the world. Unfortunately their prophecies indicate that their messiah will come after a great apocalyptic event occurs. From that point of view, Iran's leadership would even be willing to sacrifice their own country in a nuclear exchange that would eliminate Israel. Such a war would also have serious consequences for Russia, the supplier of military and nuclear expertise to Iran, and for the United States, as we stand with Israel.

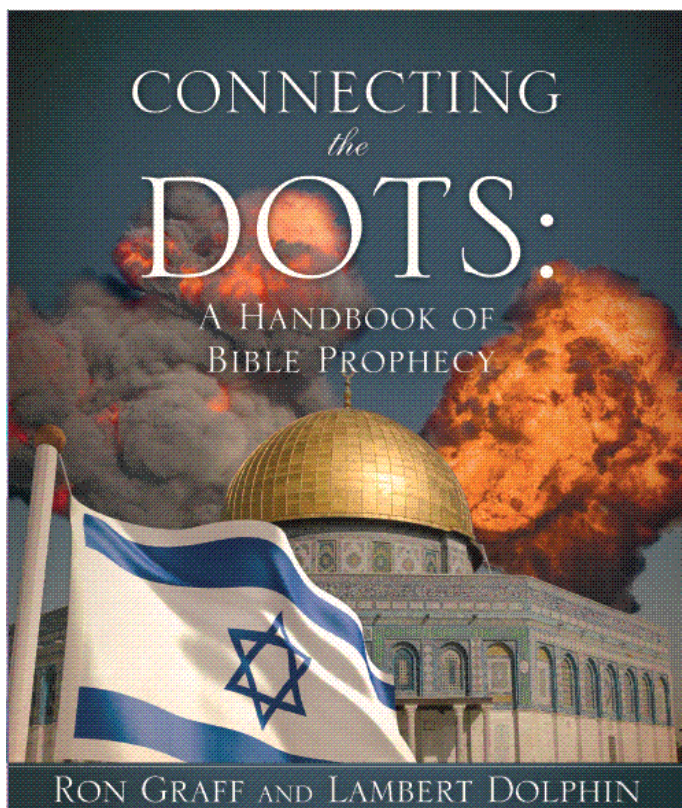
Many nations, including the U.S. tried half-hearted sanctions against Iran to cause them to abandon their nuclear ambitions. These sanctions have not worked because Russia, China, and others have not been cooperative. Therefore many observers thought that Iran would have nuclear weapons by now

unless Israel and/or the United States would conduct pre-emptive strikes to disable their nuclear programs.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this situation has been the covert actions that have set back their progress repeatedly during the past year or so. Just before the beginning of 2011, The Stuxnet worm caused the first-ever major computer attack against a specific target. It seriously disrupted Iran's centrifuges that were enriching uranium. It eventually appeared that Israel had developed the virus. During the year U.S. and/or Israeli operatives assassinated nuclear scientists and caused major explosions at the Amir-al-Mo'menin Iranian Revolutionary Guard missile base where they were preparing for attacks against Israel, and at their Isfahan nuclear enrichment facility. No one "took credit" for these accidents, but shortly afterward Iran announced the arrest of at least 15 "American and Zionist" spies. Their names and fate were not disclosed. Near the end of the year Iran captured an American drone spy plane.

Here is the bottom line about this top prophecy story of the year. At some point a major war between Israel and Iran will break out, drawing Russia and her Islamic allies into the battle. If this turns out to be the same as the great war of the 2nd Seal (Revelation 6:3-4), the quick end of that war might very well be the start-point of a seven-year covenant between Israel and the final evil world ruler (the Beast of Revelation). These seven years will be the period of the Tribulation, and believers of the Church Age will have been caught up in the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)! If you need basic information this near-future event check it out in our [Rapture section](#). If you are not sure you are prepared for it, read ["Are You Ready?"](#)

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Scripture references are from the New International Bible (NIV). Documentation, Scriptural references and illustrations may be found in the various sections of [Prophecy Central](#), "A World of Information about Bible Prophecy."

An [HTML version](#) of this report with hypertext links to documentation is available.

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