

**THE
12th IMAM:
RISE
OF THE
ANTICHRIST**

By

James W. Parker

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Introduction

Israel

According to the Bible, God promised to make Abraham a great nation through his son Isaac. He restated the promise with Isaac and then again with Jacob, who was later renamed Israel by the Lord. God also promised to give their descendants the land of Canaan for inheritance and that He would send a redeemer; who would come from the nation of Israel, out of the tribe of Judah, who would save the world from their sins.

When God brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt, He told them that they would dwell in the land if they continued to obey Him. Because of their continual idol worship and rebellion, it was prophesied that the nation of Israel would be scattered throughout the earth; but that in the 'Last Days,' God would gather them back together and make them into a nation once more. On May 14, 1948, the nation of Israel was re-established, and during the 'Great Tribulation,' the temple is supposed to be rebuilt.¹²³

The Rapture

When the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, it gave a chance for the Gentiles, anyone who is not Jewish, to receive Him as their savior. In the 'Last Days,' Jesus will come back for His people and take them back to Heaven to be with Him. Only the Father knows when this will happen, but it will be a time when men blaspheme God and are boastful and proud.

It will also be a time when people are unthankful and disobedient to parents, have unnatural affections, and despise those that are good. It will be a time when men love pleasure more than they love God. Anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, whether they are Jew or Gentile, will be taken. It will happen in the blink of an eye, leaving the unsaved to go through the 'Great Tribulation.'⁴⁵⁶⁷⁸⁹

¹ Gen. 12:1-3, 12:7, 13:15, 15:7&18, 17:19&21, 22:18, 26:3-5, 27:28-9, 28:14, 49:10

² Deut. 29:9-14 & 24-8, 30:1-10

³ Amos 9:14-15

⁴ Acts 1:8, 11:18

⁵ Matt. 24:44, 25:13

⁶ Mark 13:32

The Great Tribulation

The Great Tribulation is a seven-year period of time that begins after the rapture has occurred, a time when the 'Antichrist' will appear. At that time, the 'Two Witnesses' will appear and give witness of Jesus Christ as the 'Messiah' for three and one-half years. The 'Antichrist' will make a treaty with the nation of Israel (allowing them to rebuild the temple and re-establish the old sacrificial system), establish a one-world government and rule the world. It will be a time when God will pour out His judgment against the world, and Israel will turn back to Him as their God.¹⁰

Islam

Islam is the second-largest religion in the world.¹¹ It was founded by Muhammad in the sixth century. There are over 1.8 billion Muslims living in more than two hundred countries around the world. They make up about twenty-three percent of the world population. More than three hundred million Muslims live in countries where Islam is not the majority religion. China has more Muslims than Syria, and Russia has more Muslims living in it than there are in Jordan and Libya combined. Europe has about thirty-eight million Muslims, and there are between four and six million Muslims in America. Muslims can be found on all of the inhabited continents of the world. Islam has been trying to take over the world since Mohamed established it in the 6th century.

Exclusive of Pakistan, there are over 10,000 mosques in the world: Asia, 815; Australia and Pacific Islands, 17; Europe, 54; North America, Central America, and South America, 59; Africa, over 9000.

The Wabash Mosque in Chicago was the first house of Allah built in the United States. It was erected in 1922. Since that time, forty more mosques have been added, with about thirty just since 1982. Although every Khulafaa (Khaleefah: (plural: khulafaa'). Anglicized as caliph.) Steward, vicegerent; successor. Man is referred to as the Khaleefah or steward of God on earth. The word khaleefah was used after the death of the noble Prophet Muhammad to refer to his successor, Abu Bakr, as head of the Muslim

⁷ Luke 21:24

⁸ Thess. 4:16-8, 5:2

⁹ 2 Tim. 3:1-7

¹⁰ Rev. 7:14, 11, 12:3-4, 13:5-7, 15, 16

¹¹ Mapping the Global Muslim Population, by the Pew Research Center. www.pewforum.org

community. Later it came to be accepted as the designation for the head of the Muslim state.

Historically, for Muslims, it has been important to build mosques.¹²¹³ The pace started picking up speed after 1982 with the expansion of the Jamaat (Group, congregation, community. Example: Jamaat ul-Fuqra (alternatively Jamaat al-Fuqra) (Arabic: **إل ففراء عةءما**, "Community of the Impoverished") is a paramilitary organization of mostly African-American Muslims based in Pakistan and ...).

“Building mosques is our priority because the Holy Quran says so.”

The promised Messiah of Islam said: “if you want Islam to progress, build a mosque.”

“Mosques will continue to be built in order to see victory for Islam and unification of mankind.”

“That he may cause it to prevail over all other religions.” (48.29)

The 12th Imam

Shia Islam, Iran being one of the largest Shiite countries, believes in a coming Islamic Messiah, the 12th Imam, who will come and rule the world for seven years at the end of time. According to Shiites in Islam, the 12th Imam, or 'The Mahdi' (also known as 'The Guided One), is a descendent of Muhammad who went into hiding around the tenth century in the Jamkaran well.¹⁴¹⁵ He is said to be in occultation, or suspended animation, and will reappear near the end of time when there are oppression and tyranny. He will set up a perfect government and give people perfect spirituality. Many Shiites believe they can hurry his return by destroying Israel. Islamic details about the 12th Imam line up with Bible details about the Antichrist.

There are some factions within Islam who believe they can hurry the return of the 12th Imam by attacking Israel and destroying it.

Could the Religion of the Antichrist be with us now?

¹² <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/sacred-sites/mosques.htm>

¹³ <http://www.islamicity.com/Culture/MOSQUES/>

¹⁴ http://www.inplainsite.org/html/imam_mahdi.html

¹⁵ <https://www.allaboutpopularissues.org/12th-imam.html>

Chapter 1
So It Begins

Ahmadinejad: Israel "dying," Mideast to destroy it when given a chance.

By Reuters

Israel is a 'stinking corpse' doomed to disappear

Said in 2005, 'Israel should be wiped off the map.'

Tells west: 'Accept Israel's imminent collapse.'

Iran President: 'Israel flies Satan's flag.'

USA Today

Sometime in the future ...

Jacques Gilliam, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, called the General Assembly to order, "We are going to start this morning's session with a special announcement from the president of Iran." After a brief pause, he continued. "He has an urgent announcement to make. Please, Mr. President, the floor is yours.

President Zaakir made his way towards the front of the assembly. He almost skipped with delight as he contemplated what he was about to share with other national leaders. Finally, he would make an indelible mark on world history.

To the casual observer, Zaakir did not exude any significant characteristics one would associate with a radical regime such as Iran. He was rather short, around five-and-a-half-feet tall. His hair was cut short on the top and tapered along the sides like a military cut. He wore a pair of round John Lennon-style eyeglasses and sported a mustache and a beard. His rise to power in the Iranian government was unusual and somewhat quick. Unlike previous presidents, he did not come from a wealthy family. There were rumors in intelligence circles that powerful factions had enabled him to assume the office, but there was never any definitive proof of this. Nevertheless, this did not stop the rumors from spreading.

When he left Iran for New York City some days before, he had not dared share even the slightest detail of his announcement, not even with his family. He wanted them to be as surprised as the rest of the world. Now, he

thought, they would be especially proud of him. He knew they were proud that he had been elected president, but now he would be one of the greatest heroes of Islam and the Iranian people. He knew that he had had a mediocre presidency and accomplished very little during his term. There had been no scientific or otherwise great achievements during his tenure or at any time in his entire career, for that matter.

Next week, his term in office would be over, but he would be remembered as a hero of the state. Statues, he envisaged, would be erected in his honor. People would name buildings and their children after him. Stories would be told about his greatness for generations to come. They would tell of the president who had led the nation of Iran into a new and glorious future.

As President Zaakir approached the speaker's platform, somewhere in the Iranian desert in a secret bunker hidden under the ancient sands, General Hamal Latif watched closely. He had been waiting for this signal. He turned and looked at his men. Earlier that day, he had spoken to the president, and they had finalized all the arrangements for the sinister deed that was about to begin.

The soldiers were busy working at their posts around the bunker, which was hidden almost at the center of the country. Every man there was a hardliner that Latif had handpicked for this assignment, and all of them, like himself, were totally loyal to the Mullahs and the president. They were all willing to follow their orders to the letter without question. These men were all battle-tested, hardened, and willing, at a moment's notice, to kill the enemy or lay down their lives for their country without hesitation.

As he looked around at the technology, he chuckled to himself with delight. The secret base he was standing in was built underneath the former atomic research facility at Lavizan-Shian. The facility was originally created to enrich uranium for use in the government's nuclear missile program. The world believed it had been demolished, and the earth around it was scraped clean after it was discovered by the west.

What they didn't know was that the Iranian government had allowed the facility to be discovered in order to carry out a master deception. While satellites watched the site being destroyed, an amazing bit of choreography was going on. During the evenings, and when the satellites were not overhead, a dedicated team excavated a new facility several hundred yards away. To the casual observer, the construction was simply part of the cleanup process. Once the site of the former facility had been swept clean, western intelligence lost all interest, instead directing its energies into finding out where the new uranium enriching facility had moved. This permitted the military to quietly build a hidden missile base on the

graveyard of the previous facility.

General Latif had a bearing that commanded authority. His military bearing could not be ignored, even if he was dressed as a civilian. The general was a husky man, who, despite his age, maintained a perfect physique. The scars that ran along his right cheekbone revealed that he had seen his share of combat. They were a reminder of his younger days when he was shot by an enemy rifle during the Iran-Iraq war. However, what was most frightening about Latif were his eyes. The blackness in them had a piercing effect on a person, even if they were not looking directly at him. His stare could be felt by those he was looking at. It caused them to get that uneasy feeling that they were being watched.

He cleared his throat, and every man in the bunker quickly stopped everything he was doing, turned around, and snapped to attention.

"Men," he said in a clear, strong voice. "The time has come for us to claim our rightful place in the world. The signal has been given."

Nodding, the men all returned to complete the jobs that they had previously been working on. The general then turned to Major Jamal Sattar and said, "Initiate the final launch sequences."

"Yes, sir," replied the major. He turned to the two soldiers who were positioned at the command console. "You heard the general. Start the final launch sequence and insert your launch keys."

Sergeants Ahmad Baseer and Imani Luqman both looked up from their positions at the console and replied simultaneously, "Yes, sir," then started flipping switches in front of them. Next, they both reached up to remove the launch keys that were hanging around their necks under their uniforms. They each inserted their keys into the console and looked back up at Major Sattar for the command to launch.

"On my mark, turn your keys to launch position," he said. "Three, two, one, mark." With that, both men turned their keys.

High above the underground bunker on the desert floor, three hidden silos opened, revealing stealth-clad, nuclear-tipped missiles.

"On my mark, launch your missiles," continued the major. "Three, two, one, mark."

Both men, without hesitation, pressed their launch buttons, and all three missiles ignited. As the flames from the massive rocket engines began to rise along with their sleek black bodies, they began to rise from their launch pads on their way to their targets.

President Zaakir had perfectly timed the attack against the nation of

Israel to coincide with his speech. As part of the operation, he had also created several terror squads, which nobody outside of his inner circle knew about and designated their target cities in the United States.

These troops had all been specially trained for their particular mission, one that he did not plan to share with his audience at this time. These squads had received their final instructions, and at this very moment, they were making their final preparations for the strike against the Great Satan. He was about to accomplish the will of Allah. These attacks were the final tasks that needed to be accomplished in order to bring about the long-anticipated return of the twelfth Imam- the Mahdi, who had long ago disappeared into the Jakaram well and would now soon reappear from that same well.

The well had been Zaakir's last stop before beginning his journey to New York and the United Nations building. He had prayed to Allah for the success of his mission and his place in history upon making his announcement to the world. He had removed the cover to the well so the Mahdi would have no difficulty getting out. Initially, the seal had been placed there to keep people out. Upon his return, the Mahdi would finally take his rightful place as the leader of Islam. He would unite the different factions into one invincible force and rule the entire world in the name of Allah.

As he ascended the steps to the speaker's platform, his heart pounded wildly. Despite the lump in his throat, he could hardly wait to share his news with fellow believers.

"We're going to destroy the Zionist pigs once and for all," he mused as he topped the platform. When President Zaakir reached the microphone, he turned to the General Assembly and, looking intently at them, and began his speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the world, I am here today to make an announcement that is of the utmost importance. I would not be here if it wasn't. This is my last week as president, and I want it to mean something to my country. If this sounds like a prank to you, I assure you it is not. As my final act as the President of Iran, I will usher in a new age of peace and prosperity for Iran. Right now, there are three nuclear missiles on their way towards the Nation of Israel. Soon that nation will no longer exist. Iran is going to rid the world of this blight, and there is nothing that anyone of you in this room or anywhere else on earth can do to stop us. Not even your precious "Arrow 2 Ballistic Missile System," that you have been testing or your "Iron Dome Laser Defense System" is going to be of any use to you."

His words were met with a deafening silence. His lips crooked up into a slight smile. He let the news sink in. The effect was exactly what he had in mind. The representatives of the Western World were speechless. They

didn't know what to make of it.

“So, your last act as President is to play a prank?” asked Jakob Farber, the Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations.

“I assure you, sir, this is anything but. I'm sure that you will be receiving word of it soon from your own sources,” Zaakir replied calmly. Jakob looked at his delegation. They all had a perplexed expression on their faces. It was too fantastic to be true. But, no one would choose such a platform to play such a crude joke. What if it was true? What if their nation was on the brink of extinction?

“You must be absolutely out of your mind,” shouted Jakob Farber, the Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations. “You cannot seriously be thinking that you will be able to get away with a thing like this. Do you really think that the rest of the world is just going to stand around and look the other way while you try to murder millions of innocent people?”

After condemning the statement by the president of Iran, the Ambassador turned to his personal aide and said, “Get Prime Minister Rothberg on the line at once. We have to warn him. The military commanders must be ready to respond before any of the missiles get to Israel.”

“Don't even bother thinking that you will be able to shoot those missiles down,” responded President Zaakir. “We have encased each missile in the very same stealth material that the United States has been using on their spy planes. You will never be able to locate them. Not only will you be unable to find them on your radar screens, but the nuclear payloads in each of the missiles were armed for detonation just moments after they lifted off.

“Whether or not the missiles would actually make it the entire way to their final destinations, there would be complete devastation. If the missiles reached their targets and struck them, there would be a ground detonation from the impact, but even if by some stroke of luck you happen to be able to locate them before they struck and managed to shoot them down, there would still be an air detonation. Either way, in a few minutes, Israel will be no more.”

Chapter 2

The Attack

In Israel, Prime Minister Rothberg put down his phone after speaking to the Ambassador and shouted to his secretary, "Get me General Ackerman at the Ramat David Air Force Base. This is an emergency."

"Yes, sir," she called back and quickly looked up the number for the general. "Prime Minister, I have General Ackerman on the line."

The Prime Minister picked up his phone. "General Ackerman, this is Prime Minister Rothberg. I've just received some very disturbing news from Ambassador Farber at the United Nations building. President Zaakir of Iran has just made an announcement to the General Assembly that his country has just launched several nuclear missiles at Israel. You need to sound the alert and get your planes into the air as quickly as possible. See if it's true. If it is, locate those missiles before they reach Israel."

"NORAD has just confirmed the launch, sir. I'm issuing orders now. Sound the alarm," shouted General Ackerman to his aide. "We have incoming missiles. Get the planes into the air. We have to neutralize them before they reach Israeli soil. Get every available radar technician looking for them. *We need to locate those missiles. NOW!* Also, activate both the Arrow 2 and Iron Dome systems. They are our last line of defense against the missiles."

Down in the pilot's ready room, some of the members of the Knights of the North Squadron were relaxing while crews of technicians were out on the flight line doing minor maintenance on the squadron's planes. The Israeli Air Defense always had to make sure they had jets on alert, ready to take off on a moment's notice if the need were to arise.

On the couch, Lieutenant David Eisenberg, mission radio call sign Falcon, and Lieutenant Joseph Gelbert call sign Watchman, were trying to watch the news on the television. Across the room, in a chair reading the paper, was Captain Samuel Feingold, call sign Eagle Eye, while Major Joseph Segall, call sign Guardian, was pouring himself a cup of coffee.

"Hey Major, Captain," called out Lieutenant Gelbert, "There's something on the news that you both may want to see. There was some kind of uproar at the United Nations just now, and there's supposed to be a breaking news announcement about it any minute."

"Oh, don't worry yourself about it," replied Captain Feingold. "If there's anything that concerns us personally, we'll probably hear something about

it during our briefing tomorrow morning.”

“Yeah,” agreed Lieutenant Eisenberg. “You know there’s always some kind of a ruckus at the United Nations. Those people never seem to agree on anything.”

Major Segall added, “Somebody probably got mad because they ran out of toilet paper or something else that’s just about as important.”

As the pilots laughed together in agreement, alarms suddenly sounded all over the base. The pilots jumped to their feet and headed for the door. As they did, Eisenberg asked, “You don’t suppose this has anything to do with the news on the television, do you?”

“I don’t know,” Segall called back. “Just hurry up, get your gear, and get to your planes. We’ll find out what’s going on soon enough.”

As the pilots arrived outside, the ground crews had finished topping up their fuel tanks and readying the planes for takeoff. They climbed into their cockpits, and each pilot quickly ran down his checklist, started his engine, and began taxiing out to the runway.

As his F-161 Sufa, or Storm, aircraft rolled out onto the runway; Major Segall double-checked all his instrument’s readouts. Realizing he would be receiving his instructions once he was in the air, he called to the base control tower over his radio. “Tower, this is Guardian. Do we have clearance for takeoff?”

“Roger that,” came the reply from the tower. “You and your squadron have been cleared for immediate takeoff. Good luck and good hunting, Knights.”

One by one, the Knights of the Northern Squadron took off from the Ramat David Air Force Base. Once in the air, they received the shocking news from General Ackerman. “This is not a drill, men. Iranian president Zaakir just announced at the UN that he had launched nuclear missiles at Israel. NORAD has confirmed this. These missiles supposedly contain stealth technology, which means they cannot be located. We estimate there is at most one hour before they reach their targets. I don’t need to tell you what this means.”

Every man in the squadron was silent as they soaked in the shocking news. “We have no idea what their specific targets are, but our best guess is Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Hebron. I don’t need to tell you what a nuclear warhead can do to our country, let alone three. You need to search and destroy them before they reach their targets. Good luck, men.”

While the planes were taking off, warning sirens started to sound all over

the nation of Israel, warning the people of the imminent danger and telling them to take cover in the nearest bomb shelter.

"I'm scared, mommy; what's going on?" cried a little boy as his mother snatched him up into her arms and headed toward the nearest shelter.

Rose Sharron, a young working mother, had been heading home after picking up her son David from daycare. "I don't know, baby," she replied, "but it looks like something really bad is about to happen, and we need to hurry up and get inside that shelter over there."

As the woman and her son hurried toward the shelter, they were joined by several other people, including Peter Bernstein, Michael Goldstein, and Ben Steinman, who were speculating as to what was going on.

"Is the PLO launching another rocket attack?" asked Ben.

"I don't know," replied Peter. "Maybe Hamas is attacking again."

"I don't know either," said Michael. "But the sirens started going off all of a sudden, and I have no desire to hang around and ask questions about what is happening. I'm sure that we will probably get some kind of information after we get into the shelter. Let's get inside. We'll all be a lot safer in there than out here."

"You're probably right," agreed Ben.

"Maybe it's an air raid," added Peter, as they entered the shelter. "I thought I saw some planes taking off from the nearby airbase just as the sirens went off."

As they entered the shelter, they found several other people already inside - many of them, including John Solomon, kneeling down on the floor and crying out to God for protection.

"Yahweh," they cried out. "Please help us. We need you to watch over us. Please come and take care of your people. Put your protecting hand on us."

"What are you doing?" asked Michael. "Do you really think that's going to help us? You people need to get a hold of yourselves and start thinking clearly. There's no Yahweh out there. You're just making fools of yourselves. Come on, get up off the floor."

As he spoke, other people around the shelter silently bowed their heads and asked God for His divine intervention without paying him any attention.

"I don't care what you say or believe," replied John. "I do believe in Yahweh, and I believe that He can and will protect us if we will just call on Him. We are the descendants of Abraham, and we are His chosen people."

He will protect us in our time of greatest need."

"Guardian, this is the tower. What is your position?"

"Tower, we are almost at the border."

"Roger that, Guardian. Any signs of the missiles?"

"That's a negative tower," replied Segall. "I have not been able to find anything out here yet, and there's nothing showing up on my radar either. I'm going to head out toward the Syrian border, see if I can spot anything. Any news from the radars?"

"No," answered the tower. "We haven't found anything here either. The Americans are also having difficulty picking them up. What about one of your other men? Have any of them reported anything?"

"Wait a moment. I'll check with them and get right back to you. Eagle Eye, have you found anything out your way?"

"That's a negative," Feingold answered. "I haven't seen anything out this direction either. How about you, Watchman, have you seen anything?"

"That's a negative," came the reply, "skies are clear so far."

"Well, keep your eyes open, all of you," insisted the tower. "You need to locate every one of those missiles before they can reach their targets."

"Will do," said Guardian. "Okay, men, you heard the orders. Spread out and locate those missiles."

As the pilots visually scanned the skies for any sign that might indicate the location of the missiles, back on the ground at the airbase, technicians were working hard trying to focus on their radar screens to see if they could spot anything. Silently some of these men prayed for intervention and protection from God.

"Yahweh, help us please," they prayed. "We are your chosen people, and you said you would always be there for us. We need you now."

All of a sudden, a call came in over the radio. "Tower, this is Guardian. I think I see something on the horizon. I'm going in for a closer look."

"Roger that, Guardian. Keep us posted."

"Roger that, tower," said Guardian. "Eagle Eye, Watchman, Falcon, get a bearing off of my location and fan out. See if you can locate any more missiles."

“Guardian, this is the tower. You need to intercept that missile and shoot it down. You cannot allow it to get past you. Put it down as fast as you can.”

“Roger that tower. Watchman, Eagle Eye, Falcon, have any of the rest of you found the other missiles?”

“That’s a negative,” came the reply from each of the other pilots. “But there is a whole lot of airspace to cover up here.”

“Well, keep looking.

“Wait just a moment,” called Watchman, “I think I might have something. I’m going in to take a look.”

As Watchman banked his plane towards the north, he saw the distinctive bullet shape of a missile coming in his direction. He started to move in on his target and tried for a missile lock. For some reason, the onboard computer could not lock onto the missile despite his having it in his crosshairs. He quickly switched to his machineguns and pressed the trigger as he closed in on the missile. He knew that using guns to shoot down a missile was virtually impossible, but with time running out, he had no other choice. The bullets whizzed past the rocket, missing it entirely.

“I missed the target,” yelled Watchman over the radio. “It got away from me.”

“How?” replied the tower. “I thought you were right on top of it. What Happened?”

“I’m not sure,” said Watchman. “I couldn’t get a missile lock on it, so I used my machine guns instead. When I pulled the trigger, it just changed its course all of a sudden, and now I don’t see it anywhere at all.”

“You need to find that missile and shoot it down before it reaches its target, whatever it is. Guardian, do you have any kind of a visual sighting yet?”

“That’s a negative,” said Guardian. “Whatever I thought I saw, it’s no longer there. It’s like it just disappeared. I couldn’t really be sure of what I saw. I didn’t really get a clear look at it.”

In the skies over Israel, the three missiles that had been heading for three completely different targets suddenly and simultaneously changed their initial headings. They altered their courses, and each came alongside the others. The move was unusual, and it almost seemed as if they were being piloted by live people. They lined up in a perfect V formation similar to what fighter pilots would do when exercising precision flying. They were all starting to converge on the exact same target, which would now be

subjected to not just one, but three horrific nuclear blasts. Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, people still outside of the shelters, including Mark Lieberman, scanned the skies over the city to see if they could spot anything headed in their direction.

“Look over there,” shouted Mark, pointing up into the sky. “I think I can see something heading in this direction. Everyone get inside NOW!”

One by one, the three missiles passed overhead and descended toward their new target, the Temple Mount where the Dome of the Rock was constructed. The Dome of the Rock was the third holiest site in Islam, second only to Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. Muslims believe the site is where Abraham was willing to sacrifice Ishmael; however, the Bible declared Isaac was the one God told Abraham to offer up for a sacrifice. Missile after missile struck the site, completely obliterating the Dome of the Rock.

Amazingly, the missiles failed to detonate their warheads. What explosions there were appeared to be very specific, almost like shaped charges used for demolishing buildings. The only structure that was affected was the Dome of the Rock; no other structures were touched. This was a surgical strike. As the smoke from the explosion began to clear, it was evident that nothing remained of the mosque but a massive pile of rubble.

Back at the airfield, questions flew everywhere. “What in heaven's name just happened out there,” yelled General Ackerman.

“I can't really say for sure what it was, sir,” responded Colonel Rothstein, “but it seems that there has just been an explosion in or near the city of Jerusalem.”

“Was there a nuclear explosion?”

“No, sir, it wasn't a nuclear explosion, but it was rather large and may have done quite a bit of damage.”

“Well,” ordered General Ackerman. “Get soldiers from the closest base to Jerusalem and have them check out the damage as quickly as possible. There may be casualties, so get medical teams out there as well, and don't forget to tell them to bring the radiation detectors. There may not have been a nuclear explosion, but if there was plutonium on board, there might be radiation leaking out and contaminating the surrounding area.”

“Yes, sir,” said Colonel Rothstein. “I'll call the base and have them put some men on it right away.”

Meanwhile, back at the bomb shelter in Jerusalem, some of the people inside slowly crept outside to see what had just happened.

"Are you really sure?" asked Rose. "Do you really think you should be going outside before the all-clear has sounded? You don't know if it's all over yet or not. Maybe this is just the first round of many more attacks. Don't you think we should wait until someone in authority comes and tells us that it's okay to leave the shelter?"

"You can stay here if you want to," answered Michael. "But I want to take a look around and see what kind of damage has been done. It seems to be pretty quiet out there right now. We're just going to take a quick little peek outside. Don't worry, we'll be right back, and we'll be fine."

As the men slowly emerged from the shelter, Peter remarked, "Wow, would you look at that."

"Oooo," said Ben. "That's really a big mess over there. I bet somebody is going to get in a whole lot of trouble for this mistake. I really don't think that that was the target they were trying to hit, do you?"

"You might be able to make jokes at a time like this," said Michael. "But we could have all been killed. Let's get back to the bunker."

After the men returned to the shelter and told everyone what they saw, everyone started leaving the shelter to have a look. As the people exited the shelter and wandered over to look at the remains of the Dome of the Rock, military security forces began pulling up into the area.

"People," called Sergeant Mike Bender through his bullhorn. "You all need to stay back away from the rubble. The missile that crashed here were supposedly loaded with nuclear material, and there is still a possibility that some of the radiation from those weapons could leak out. We have some emergency medical teams over here, and they're going to take all of you to the emergency room so you can be checked out for any kind of radiation contamination."

As soldiers rounded up all the people in the area and handed them over to the medical personnel, nuclear technicians Corporal James Davidson, Private Andrew Samuelson, and others started going over the entire area around the remains of the Dome of the Rock. As they slowly looked over the rubble, they checked their equipment for any signs of radiation leakage. What was striking was that the areas around the mosque appeared to be untouched, while the Dome of the Rock was a pulverized mass of rock and concrete.

"Wow!" exclaimed Corporal Davidson. "Just look around. It seems like all the damage has been confined to the area where the Dome of the Rock used to be. How do you explain a thing like that?"

"I don't know," replied Private Samuelson. "But I'm not detecting any signs of radiation."

"There must have been a really bad flaw in the missile's design, lucky for us."

"Yeah, looks like the nuclear package may have had a bad design as well. It probably didn't provide an equal force on all sides to cause a proper implosion of the plutonium. It looks like it was just enough of an explosion to destroy the mosque. I bet the fat is really going to hit the fan back in Iran tonight for this screw-up. Well, at least they won't be able to blame anyone in Israel for this."

"Yeah, we were the ones who were attacked, and Iran has already claimed responsibility for it. I wonder if our government is going to be able to take advantage of this incident."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, with the Dome of the Rock gone, maybe now they will be able to start rebuilding the temple."

"Whatever happens, I can tell you one thing for sure; this is a real miracle from God. I mean, think about it; none of our people were hurt, the nuclear weapons failed to go off, and now the Temple Mount can be cleared so that the temple can be rebuilt to honor Yahweh. What else could it have been but a miracle from God?"

Chapter 3

Fall of the Great Satan

"Ahmadinejad rails against capitalism."

World news

"Iranian President predicts the collapse of the West."

World Press

"America still represents the "great Satan" to Iran. President Rafsanjani said Israel's propaganda had poisoned the United States. One Ayatollah blamed America for bloodshed around the world and said: "This satanic superpower will never be successful against the Islamic Republic."

In his duties as vice-president of the Senate, Jonathan Mitchell pounded his gavel and called for order. "We must come to some kind of agreement. The gentlemen from California and Texas will lower their voices and stop arguing. Now return to your seats so that we can continue with this special session."

Senators Bill O'Connor and John Wilson had been shouting at each other on the Senate floor. They both turned and looked at the vice-president and then slowly returned to their seats.

"There will be no more such outbursts in this chamber," demanded the vice-president. "We still have to make a serious and grave decision. What should our response be for this outrageous and unprovoked attack upon the nation of Israel?"

O'Connor was from California and was elected by carrying the liberal vote in the big cities, such as San Francisco and Los Angeles. "Mr. President, I still don't see how this attack affects us in any way, or why we should be expected to give any kind of a response at all," he declared. "First of all, it wasn't an attack against the United States of America. Secondly, it didn't even work."

"No," replied Senator Wilson, who was a conservative Republican from Texas. Wilson and his Democratic colleague frequently butted heads whenever bills came up for a debate. "It was not an attack against us, but it was against one of our allies, someone that we have signed a treaty with! A treaty that says that we will help to defend them in a time of war."

“WAR?” What do you mean war? There has not been any formal declaration of war made against anyone.”

“Just what in the world are you thinking about, man? What are you dumb, deaf and blind, or just plain stupid? You are actually going to stand here and make us believe that launching several nuclear warheads against a sovereign nation is NOT an act of war? Even YOU cannot be that stupid. If it's not an act of war, what do you think should constitute an act of war? Complete and total annihilation? Is that what it would take for you, sir?”

“No, no, no, of course not,” O’Conner retorted. “But we must keep our cool and act reasonably. The attack, after all, was a complete and utter failure. The nuclear payload did not go off, and not a single Israeli citizen was hurt in the attack, much less killed. As a matter of fact, the only thing the missiles hit was the dome of the rock I believe that they are about to experience a whole lot of trouble, probably a lot more than they can handle, from the rest of the Islamic world. That will happen without us ever having to do a single thing in the way of a response, don’t you think?”

He added, “The Dome of the Rock was, after all, a pretty important shrine to every Muslim in the world. I believe that just about every one of them will be very upset with the Iranians right about now for destroying it. Even if they keep claiming it was done by accident, it was most certainly their missiles that did it. I mean, they can’t even deny having any part in the destruction. They have already announced to the entire world that they were the ones who launched the missiles in the first place.”

“Yeah, you know he’s right about that,” agreed Senator Bob Stevens. “They’re going to be in such major trouble that we don’t even have to lift a single finger for them to get their just desserts.”

“Are you out of your ever-loving mind, or are you just as stupid as him?” asked Kansas Republican Senator Ted Roberts. “I mean you’d have to be a raving maniac if you don’t think that would be just the type of response like the one that caused bin Laden and his group of crazy fanatics to attack the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and wherever else that fourth plane was going that crashed in Pennsylvania back in 2001. Or don’t you even remember what happened on 9/11?”

“Of course I remember what happened,” Stevens replied. “It was a terrible thing. Who could ever forget?”

“Well, bin Laden attacked because he thought we were weak, a ‘paper tiger’ as he put it. He didn’t think we’d have the nerve to do anything about it, and he thought he’d get away with it. Suppose we fail to respond to this unprovoked attack, and I mean respond in force right now. In that case, there just might be some other terrorist group out there who may come to the same conclusion bin Laden did. And we just might find ourselves right smack dab in the middle of another 9/11, maybe even worse.

“The fact that the attack on Israel was a failure is beside the point, and it was not in any way due to lack of trying on their part. The Iranians were doing the very best they could to succeed; it just so happened that their best was not good enough, at least this time around. They made some major miscalculations in their planning stages, but next time, and there will definitely be a next time if they have anything to do with it, they will not make those same mistakes. Next time they try something like this; they will work out all those bugs. Then what are we going to do?”

He paused for a moment and quietly looked at the faces of the people assembled. In a deliberate voice, he said, “Has any of you gentlemen given any thought to that next time? We had better start getting our act together before it's too late. We need to do something to respond to this act of terrorism, and we had better *do it now!* If the nation of Iran is not punished for this attack and, I mean severely punished, then they or maybe some other group of terrorists, like Hamas or Al-Qaida, may feel like they can try something else and feel like they can get away with it as well.”

"No, it should not be up to us to have to respond to this matter in any way," insisted Stevens. "We are not the police of the world, jumping into every little thing that happens in other nations. This should be a matter that only the Israelis have a right to respond to since they were the ones attacked."

“Better yet,” he continued. “I think that it would be preferable for the U.N. Security Council to decide what the official response of the entire world should be.”

“*The United Nations?* You must be kidding,” a furious Roberts said. “That body is just a corrupt assembly of socialist wimps and dictator thug nations who cannot even defend their own countries without our help. You think we should depend on them to make an adequate response to Iran's attack. Even if they did agree to come up with some kind of resolution, they could never, or would never back it up.

“Remember, there were more than fourteen resolutions made against Saddam Hussein over the years. He just thumbed his nose at them and ignored them until we went in and removed him from power. It was not the United Nations that took him out. No, it was the United States of America. We were the ones who had to go in and do the job for the rest of the world.”

Over in the White House, President Jefferson Goodman was also conducting a meeting in the Oval Office with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In attendance were General Henry Williams, the Commanding General of the Army; General Stephen Ferguson, the Commanding General of the Air Force; General Mitchell Robertson, Commandant of the Marine Corps; Admiral Anthony Pearson, the Commanding Admiral of the Navy and

Admiral Joseph Coker, the Commanding Admiral of the Coast Guard.

A call came to General Williams from Army Intelligence. After a few moments, he hung up the phone and returned to the conversation.

"We have just received a situational update on the results of the tests the Israeli technicians have been conducting on the missiles. They have been looking over the missiles to see if they can determine the cause of the malfunctions that occurred. They have been trying to find why they failed to detonate and why they just happened to go off their courses and wind up at the same destination."

"Well, man," declared General Robertson impatiently. "Don't keep us hanging here in suspense; give us the details. What did they find?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?" replied General Robertson and Admiral Pearson together, almost in unison.

"What do you mean nothing?" asked Admiral Coker.

"What I mean is that the Israeli technicians say they cannot locate any kind of malfunction in the guidance system or in the nuclear payload. They are all sure that the design of the nuclear bombs is quite sound and can't figure out why it didn't work. There is something else that is kind of interesting."

"What do you mean, interesting?" asked General Robertson.

"Well," said General Williams, "The technicians mentioned that one of the nuclear warheads didn't have any uranium around the nuclear payload."

"What good would that do?" asked President Goodman. "You need the uranium in order to produce nuclear detonation."

"That's right," said General Robertson, "unless you're trying for a low-yield nuclear weapon. It was probably originally targeted for Jerusalem. Looks like they weren't trying to destroy the Dome of the Rock."

"What do you mean low-yield?" asked the president.

"A Neutron Bomb, like the ones they were working on back in the 1970s," said General Robertson. "It was a tactical nuclear weapon designed by Sam Cohen, who worked on the Manhattan Project back in World War II. The Administration thought they could sell it for deployment in Europe, where it was felt a major conflict would be, because it could be used to kill the enemy soldiers, but would leave the entire infrastructure intact."

"Yeah," said General Williams, "but it didn't have the response from the people that the Administration expected."

"What do you mean?" asked President Goodman.

"Well," said Admiral Pearson, "a reporter found out about the weapon and wrote about it in the Washington Post, and it sparked all kinds of protests in Europe. There were already people protesting the deployment of nuclear weapons on European soil, but when they found out about the tactical nukes, they said it would escalate the war, not decrease it."

"Yeah," said Admiral Coker, "they put so much pressure on their leaders that even those that wanted the weapons were so afraid of the political fallout they wouldn't openly support it. Eventually, the Bush administration shut the program down completely."

"Wasn't Sam Cohen Jewish?" asked General Robertson. "Ironic, isn't it, that the Iranians would use a weapon created by a Jew to try and destroy the Jewish nation?"

"Yes, he was." Said General Williams. "Anyway, getting back to why the missiles failed. There are some technicians who think they may have a plausible answer."

Admiral Pearson said, "What do they think happened?"

"Some of the technicians seem to think that Yahweh stepped in and protected the nation of Israel from harm," replied General Williams.

"Yahweh," said General Ferguson. "What is that; some kind of mystical, mythological creature with magical powers like a genie or something?"

"No, Yahweh is the ancient Hebrew name for God. In the United States, we have Americanized it to Jehovah, and there are some pastors who teach that Jehovah in the Old Testament is Jesus in the New Testament because they both claim some of the same titles: Shepherd, The Rock, Redeemer, and The Beginning and The End, just to name a few."

"You don't mean to say," declared General Robertson. "That the Israelis believe that Jesus Christ somehow reached out with his hand and just re-aimed those missiles at the Dome of the Rock and then kept them from exploding in a nuclear blast, do you?"

"Well, no," replied General Williams. "There are some Messianic Jews who believe that Jesus was God in human flesh and that he came to earth to live a life we could never live, then died for our sins and rose again three days later. However, most Jews don't accept him as Messiah, but some of them do think it was a miracle from God that saved them."

"Miracle from God indeed," Admiral Coker declared sarcastically. "I am pretty sure that if they go ahead and just keep looking, they will find the real answer."

"You don't believe in God then?" asked General Williams, "or in

miracles?"

"I only believe in what I can see, what I can hear, and what I can feel. Not in some mythological, supernatural being. Don't tell me you believe there is something supernatural behind this."

"Yes, I do. In fact, the same thing happened in 2014 when Hamas was launching thousands of missiles into Israel and had a network of underground tunnels," General Williams said.

"Israel was forced to destroy their entire network of tunnels. During that time, a headline in The Jewish Telegraph had a story, and the headline said, 'Their God changes the path of our rockets in mid-air, said a terrorist.' During that same battle, there was a time when their Iron Dome battery failed three times to down an incoming rocket headed for Tel Aviv. The Israeli commander said the missile was headed for the Kirya, the equivalent of the Pentagon, or a railway station. He said after the Iron Dome missed the missile, they had only four seconds before it would hit when suddenly a heavy wind came up and sent the missile crashing into the sea. So yes, I do believe the evidence is clear that God watches over Israel."

"Gentlemen," interrupted President Goodman. "We are not here to debate philosophy, religion, or anything else of that nature. We are here to make a decision about what would be an appropriate response to Iran's attack against Israel."

"Mr. President," said General Ferguson. "At this moment, almost the entire Muslim world is seething with anger against Iran. Most of them would be willing to go along with punishing them, what with the destruction of the Dome of the Rock and all, but very soon, they just might start getting over it. You have to remember; many of them don't feel that Israel has a legitimate right to exist and would love to see the entire nation wiped off the face of the world. Many of the Muslim nations don't even acknowledge the existence of Israel on any of their maps of the region. If we are going to do anything, we had better hurry up and do it before they change their minds."

"Well, you need to get together with your strategists and division commanders," the President responded. "You will need to coordinate whatever plans you decide upon with Israel, and then make what you feel is the appropriate response to the attack. We need to hurry, though, before we find ourselves without the backing of the rest of the Muslim world; we need to come up with a strategy, and soon. I told the press this afternoon that I would be making an announcement before Congress tonight, and that's in just a little over an hour."

Chapter 4

America Is Down

Samuel Reynolds sat at his new desk at his office at Ana-chip. The company had gone from humble beginnings to a Fortune 500 company in a matter of a few years. The company was the brainchild of Brett Reed, a protégé of Steve Jobs. Following the death of Jobs, he quietly left and started his own tech company. Ana-chip was now becoming known as the leader in the microchip community. However, unlike many of his colleagues in Silicon Valley, Reed had built his company in Miami, Florida, as far from Silicon Valley as possible.

Sam sat at his desk and thought about his life. He was an only child who was raised by a single mother; his father died in a car crash when he was only five years old. He was about five foot ten and always had a slight weight problem. As a teenager, he would gain and lose weight fairly easily, depending on how active he was. He enjoyed reading and taught himself to work on computers.

Samuel got an old desktop computer from a friend of his family, and he upgraded the memory and software. His best friend's dad taught them both how to do simple maintenance on cars, and he used what he learned to try and keep his mother's car running for her. He took vo-tech classes in high school to improve his knowledge of cars and computers.

In college, Samuel studied computer science and learned to code, earning a Bachelor of Science degree. After graduation, he went on to work for a Miami-based Computer Company, where he worked as a programmer. He had never considered himself to be a religious person, but as time passed, his affinity for religion became less and less. He would spend time at the office and then with his friends and family. Denise, his wife, on the other hand was religious. At least she went to Church regularly. In the beginning, they had had quite a few heated debates about church. Sam would make up excuses not to go, and Denise wanted him there with her.

When Ana-chip started, he was hired as a programmer and promoted from head programmer to the head of the programming and chip technical design departments. It was now his responsibility to direct both departments and find a way to integrate the new Ana-chip for human testing. Similar chips had been used in animals successfully. They could be injected under an animal's skin, and if the animal got lost, authorities could use the GPS to find it. Once it was found, they could access information on the chip to obtain the owner's contact information.

However, the Ana-chip went far beyond that. The problem with current chips was the information was static, and updating that information was a

lengthy process. However, Ana-chip was designed to carry a person's entire life and medical history. In addition, it could be updated in real-time. If you went to a physician, as soon as he entered the data into the system, it would automatically be updated in the chip.

This could be a way for anyone to always have access to their medical records. Doctors wouldn't need to ask so many questions. They could just read it off the chip. In fact, it was hoped that the Ana-chip would finally be the silver bullet to help with healthcare costs. Now, a person would not even have to go and see a doctor. The physician could simply access the information while the patient stayed at home, and in many cases, obtain enough information for a diagnosis.

The main problem that had to be resolved was the body rejecting the chip. The body treated it like an invading foreign body and would send antibodies to break down and consume the chip. In addition, there was the problem of the chip irritating the surrounding tissue.

Although the chip was actually very small, about the size of a grain of rice, it was still made of metal and plastic and needed to be integrated into human tissue without causing any kind of unwanted physical reactions or irritations. Sam called a meeting with his department heads earlier that morning and told them to put their best people on the problem. One day, if they could just get the chip to work right, it might be able to access more than just a person's medical records; maybe it could help move the world further into a paperless society. When he had joined the company, he would have never imagined that he would be working on such ground-breaking technology. At that time, he just thought of himself as a software developer, and nothing more. Now, here he was, discussing the latest, most innovative technology with the heads of the other departments.

The chip just might help relieve the need to store paper files and maybe help save the trees in the rainforest, Sam thought to himself. Not that I'm really that much of a tree-hugging environmentalist, but if I can do my part to help save the planet, so much more, the better for the environment.

"There's not really much of anything else for me to do today," he thought to himself. "I guess I'll head on over to Denise's office and see if we might be able to head home a little early and get our weekend started a little sooner."

Sam finished clearing all of the paperwork from his desk, pushed his chair back, and stood up to leave. As he closed his office door, he made a final check of everything before locking up for the weekend. He turned and slowly headed down the hallway until he came to the office of the Director of Sales and Distribution.

Sam and Denise met at work. She was hired into the sales department a few weeks after he had joined the company. From the first time he saw her,

he was attracted to her. He was in the break room when he noticed her; she was on a tour of the facility. She was around five-four with long auburn hair and green eyes. She had an athletic body which showed that she cared for it. Sam, on the other hand, was on the heavier side. Denise was a religious person. She went to church regularly and helped out in any way she could. The church's pastor, Pastor Glenn, was very fond of her. He was also interested in Sam, and kept finding excuses to visit their house as well as try to rope Sam into attending the church.

The next time he saw her, she was in the parking lot. She was having trouble with her car. Samuel went over and offered to help her; she accepted his help, and as they talked, she agreed to have dinner with him.

The two went a date and had talked for hours. There was no awkwardness. They talked as if they had known each other for a long time. Things escalated fast after that and after a few months of dating, they decided to get married and bought a three bedroom starter home on the edge of the city. While many of their colleagues lived in their own technical world 24 hours a day with little knowledge of anything that did not have a computer processor in it, they enjoyed the simpler things in life.

Sam loved tinkering with cars, while Denise loved doing gardening and interior decorating around the house. She was also popular around the neighborhood. People liked her easygoing personality and she made friends easily. Her winning personality and social skills, along with her sales ability, allowed Denise to move up quickly to become the head of the sales department. Sam knocked on the door to make sure she was not in a meeting with anyone.

"Come on in," said Denise.

"Are you busy?" asked Sam.

"No, why?"

"I was just wondering if you thought we might be able to head home a little early."

Denise placed a file in the drawer, turned and looked at her empty desk, and said: "I think I might just be able to pull myself away. As a matter of fact, I was just thinking about coming over to your office to see if you could get away early."

"Well," replied Sam, "they say that great minds think alike, don't they?"

All over the country, people were discussing the details of the violent and unprovoked attack against the nation of Israel. They were talking about how shocked they were that Iran would do such a thing. Some of

them even argued about whether or not the United States should get involved in any way with Israel over their response to Iran.

While discussions all over Washington D.C. were taking place, nobody noticed an old, beat-up cargo van with a lone driver inside on the far side of town. It looked like a throwback to another era; its large size echoed back to the time when people were unconcerned with the high price of gasoline.

The Ford van showed the scars from many years of use hauling cargo. The only windows were the windshield and where the driver and passenger would sit. This part of the city was known for its high crime rate, and normally a strange vehicle would be a ripe target for the auto thieves in the area, but the condition and age protected it from being taken. However, if a criminal knew what was inside the vehicle, he would have done anything to take its current cargo, which was worth millions to the right buyer. Of course, to get it, they would have to contend with the driver who was not likely to let his prize fall into another's hands.

Abdul Mosul, a fanatical Iranian terrorist, had just arrived in the city only a few days earlier. He and many of his fellow special operatives had spent the last several months training for this particular mission, and he was now about to reach his final destination. His heart pumped hard and fast, and his hands were sweating in anticipation of the completion of his final assignment. Over the months, he, along with other men in other cities, had slowly been receiving smuggled parts for a nuclear bomb. Great care was taken to have the parts broken down as much as possible to avoid being detected by customs officials at American ports.

Other parts were smuggled in from Mexico and Central America. If the smuggler was captured, he would appear to be simply another illegal alien looking for a job in the land of plenty. The parts were disguised not to be noticed by the border patrol if they were caught. The agents were used to seeing drugs, not parts for a portable suitcase nuclear bomb. By using great patience, they were able to assemble it without law enforcement or intelligence officials having any idea what was happening.

Earlier that week, the last and most important part of the bomb arrived, the nuclear material itself. The enriched uranium was the most dangerous part of the operation. If it was detected, government officials would have easily been able to trace it back to Iran. Miraculously, not only did the material make it to the operatives, it arrived without so much as an eyebrow being raised by authorities. He made a great effort to make sure that everything was assembled properly, not wanting any mistakes to occur now that he was so close to his goal. If anything went wrong now, it would be a disaster since what he was going to do was based on a precise timetable.

"I can't fail in my mission now," he thought as he drove. *"Allah, please help me to succeed. Help me so that I may send every last one of these*

infidels to Jahannum” (the word for hell in Islamic belief)

At the same time that Abdul was driving his van through the backstreets of Washington D.C., around the country, in strategically chosen state capitols, several groups of his fellow terrorists were doing the same. These drivers pulled their trucks up to the different statehouses, where all the different legislatures were in the process of performing their duties. When they arrived at their chosen destinations, they parked their vehicles and checked their watches to make sure that they were all on schedule.

“We must be precise and on time if we are to cause the most confusion, along with the damage,” said Hamal Rashid, one of the group leaders.

Unlike the nuclear weapons planned for Washington DC and New York, these were conventional ANFO bombs similar to what was used in Oklahoma City. The plan was for all of the bombs to go off at exactly the same moment with a precision that would surpass the execution of operations by American Special Forces.

Hamal had waited his whole life to prove himself a great leader, and now he was about to fulfill his destiny. He told Jaleel Nasser, his second in command, to set the detonator on the bomb in the back of the truck.

“When this bomb goes off along with the others,” said Jaleel. “There is going to be a whole lot of confusion and destruction all over this country. They are not going to know what hit them; it will be so bad for them.”

“Well, that was the idea from the beginning,” agreed Hamal. “That is why we have to be so precise on the timing. When all this happens at the same moment, we will cause as much terror as we possibly can. This is going to make the attacks on 9/11 seem insignificant in comparison. With the loss of so many leaders, the United States is going to be completely paralyzed. With their being unable to respond, there will be nothing to stop us from accomplishing the rest of our mission.”

“With the fall of the United States,” added Jaleel. “No other country in the world will ever be willing to try and stop us. After this, they will all be too afraid of retaliation.”

“Allah be praised!” they both shouted as their truck bomb detonated.

At the same time, around the country, all the other truck bombs went off in unison.

As he drove through the outskirts of the city, Abdul was very careful to make sure that he followed all the rules of driving. He pulled up to a stop sign, making sure that the van came to a complete stop, took his time to

look both ways for any cross traffic, and slowly proceeded through the intersection.

I have to be extremely careful; he kept thinking to himself. "I don't want to do anything that will draw attention to this vehicle. I especially don't want to get pulled over by the police for some avoidable traffic violation, not now when I am so close to completing my mission. I can't fail Allah now.

Earlier, he did a detailed inspection of the vehicle to make sure everything was working and in place. The brake, tail, and headlights were checked to ensure no bulbs were burned out. He also verified the license plates were firmly attached. He remembered how in 1995, Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was captured over a missing license plate that had fallen off. McVeigh had worked with a Middle Eastern terrorist with Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard. Fortunately, the Clinton administration chose to blame the attack on conservative groups who were opposed to his agenda and chose to ignore the Middle Eastern men who also participated in the bombing, which killed 168 people. Their lack of attention to the Islamic threat would soon cost the Americans dearly, he thought.

He turned on his signal and slowed down for another intersection, where he slowly turned the corner and drove his van through the backstreets of the city. He was visiting Washington for weeks and faithfully drove all the streets of the city to find just the right route. He practiced driving this route many times and finally figured out what he thought was the safest and best way to reach the downtown area with the least amount of trouble and with the fewest chances to be stopped by the police. Now, as he drove, he followed his planned route without any incidents.

Slowly, Abdul drove his van to the edge of the downtown area. He turned into a semi-secluded street and drove as close to the Capitol Building as he could without being stopped. Slowly, he pulled into a parking lot, parked the van, and turned off the ignition. Abdul slowly turned in the driver's seat, climbed out of the chair, and made his way into the back of the van. As he climbed into the back, he looked at his watch to check the time to make sure he was running on schedule.

"Ah," he thought. "I have plenty of time to get ready. Our Intelligence says that all the political leaders are in town for special sessions. While they are busy trying to decide what to do, we will be able to strike a major blow for Allah against the United States. This will cripple them but well. All of the other teams should be reaching their destinations right about now."

He opened a panel on the side of the nuclear device, set the timer for one minute, and then began his final prayer to Allah. "Oh, most merciful and powerful Allah, may my life now bring glory and honor to you. May you

bring a final and fitting judgment down on these infidels. I strike now at the heart of the Great Satan in your name. I pray that all of my comrades will be just as successful in all of their ventures as I am about to be in mine. May your will now be done.

As he finished his prayer to Allah, the timer on the nuclear bomb finished counting down to zero. In a flash of light and under a mushroom cloud: Washington D.C. became another Hiroshima.

Washington DC is known as the seat of power for the United States, but it is also home to some of the country's numerous tributes to the greatness of American exceptionalism, hearkening back to the country's deep religious heritage.

There is the Jefferson Memorial, near ground zero for tonight's nuclear attack. Although its namesake, Thomas Jefferson, was a deist, he nevertheless believed in God, and these words of his are engraved on one of the walls:

"God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever."

These prophetic words were now coming to pass as the beautiful marble stone was obliterated in an instant, felled by the first enemy America had ever fought. Indeed, it was Jefferson himself who ordered the fledgling American Navy to war against the Muslim Barbary Coast pirates, where they achieved the first of many victories against the nation's enemies that were immortalized in the first line of the Marines Hymn, "to the shores of Tripoli."

The Washington Monument was made in the image of a pagan symbol, the Egyptian obelisk; however, the founder of this great nation was a devout Christian who warned his countrymen not to stray from the God of the Bible. It, too, was gone.

A familiar sight to the nation's sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln, whose giant likeness adorned the memorial built in his honor; his furrowed brow reflected the heavy burden of a man who ordered thousands of men to their deaths at the hands of their fellow countrymen. Now the sad look is vaporized in a fire hotter than the crucible of civil war could ever be.

The White House, which survived being burned by another enemy when the British came through during the war of 1812, now succumbed to a fire a million times hotter.

The capital, which was spared from destruction on September 11, 2001,

due to the heroic actions of average Americans on Flight 93, finally succumbed to the Muslim scourge at a time when the president, Supreme Court, and both houses of Congress were in session over the Iranian attack on Israel.

Ironically, while these artifacts highlighting America's founding fathers were destroyed, the most precious items of America's greatness remained protected.

The Declaration of Independence has often been referred to as America's birth certificate. These words echoed forth the birth of a new nation as the young colonies declared their independence from the tyrannical reign of King George V. Its words were immortalized and recited by schoolchildren and adults alike. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights among these are life liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

With its revolutionary form of government that established the people as having the right to self-governance rather than the government ruling over the people, the constitution also survived the savage terror that destroyed everything around it. Its wonderful prohibitions and restraint on federal power to only those specifically granted, which proclaimed the founder's wisdom, would go on to carry the torch of freedom and hope to a nation that would rise from the ashes inflicted on it this day.

Many decades ago, wise leaders put in safeguards during the height of the Cold War whereby a mechanism would drop these precious documents to a hidden vault below ground where they would be preserved and protected.

As all of these events were occurring, another series of attacks were being prepared across the nation. There would be no more nuclear blasts on American soil that day. The Iranian government was forced to utilize all of the plutonium it had enriched wisely and sparingly.

The West, for years, kept meticulous eyes on Iran while this voluminous country the size of Oregon was able to coordinate secret operations such as the construction of its secret missile base. Because of these watchful eyes, the amount of nuclear material it was able to refine was much less than the great Satan possessed in its nuclear arsenal. As such, it only had enough for bombs intended for Israel and the two bombs for America. With the loss of the bomb in New York, coupled with the mysterious force that diverted and disarmed the missiles launched against Israel, the D.C. nuclear weapon was the only one that was successfully deployed.

However, they planned to capitalize on their attacks with a series of other actions taken elsewhere throughout the country. Around the moment of detonation of the bomb in D.C., another deadly attack was planned. One

that would not directly bring about any casualties, yet it would go on to kill far more than the bombs ever would.

For years, the federal government was warned about the vulnerability of its electrical grid from terrorist activity, especially the dangers from an electromagnetic pulse or EMP attack and how easy it would be to carry out. But in typical bureaucratic fashion, they held hearings but did nothing. In addition to the bombers at the state capitals, three cargo ships manned by Iranian soldiers were strategically maneuvering just outside the west coast. These ships launched hand-held missiles towards the mainland. Unlike the nuclear bomb in D.C., these missiles contained no explosive warhead. Instead, their purpose was to create an electromagnetic pulse.

The EMP would not just crash America's electrical grid, but every electronic item in its path would be fried. Automobiles would become nothing more than large piles of metal; aircraft would fall from the sky. Radios, televisions, computers; all of them would be nothing more than junk. Then, like dominos falling, a large portion of the nation was plunged into darkness. The operation could not have gone off better if it had been organized and conceived in the finest war colleges of the world. Indeed, it would go down in the history books where it would be studied and taught by military planners and antiterrorism experts as a textbook example of an insurgent terrorist campaign for years to come.

America had returned to the 19th century.

Chapter 5
The Rapture

For the LORD himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD.

...the day of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Then there should be two in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Watch therefore for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not the angels...neither the son, but the father.

Sam and Denise said goodbye to their coworkers and headed out to their car in the parking lot. As they drove home, Sam's cell phone rang. Dave Brown, his friend, and next-door neighbor, called because he was having some more trouble with his car. Dave wondered if Sam could come over when they got home and take another look at it for him.

Sam's hobby was working on and restoring cars in his spare time. If he was not working, you could definitely find him in his spacious garage, tinkering away at his car or someone else's. Most women found this to be irritating. They didn't want their husbands spending so much time in the garage, but Denise was not like most women. She adored her husband and loved the fact that he was so passionate about his hobby. She too was the same when it came to interior decorating. It seemed like every other month, she would change the setting of one or more rooms. Once Sam even joked with her, that every time he emerged from the garage, it seemed like he had entered someone else's house.

"Sure, as a matter of fact, we're almost home now. I'll get my tools and come over to see if I can help you locate the problem."

“Was that Dave?” asked Denise. “Is he having more trouble with his car?”

“Yeah,” responded Sam, “I’m going to go over to his house and see if I can be of some help to him once we get home.”

“Why don’t he and Susan just buy a new car?”

“Well,” replied Sam, “you know that they’re just teachers at a small Christian school, and they really don’t get paid a lot of money. He says that they just can’t afford a car right now, and it’s cheaper to work on this car and keep it running for a little while longer.”

“Didn’t he make more money when he was working for the University?” asked Denise.

“Yeah,” but when their church started school, he quit the University. Let me see, how did he put it? He said he and Susan felt ‘called by the Lord’ to help teach the kids there. He said, ‘the Lord will supply our needs.’”

“Yeah,” agreed Denise sarcastically, “he sure seems to think that God is supplying you for his needs, doesn’t he?”

“Well,” said Sam, “that’s okay. You know that I enjoy working on cars.”

“Okay,” replied Denise as they pulled into their driveway. “Get your tools and go on over and have yourself some fun. I’m just going to go into the house and watch some of the soaps that I recorded.”

As Denise headed into the house, Sam grabbed his toolbox and battery charger and went over to Dave and Susan’s house. As he entered the garage, he walked over to where Dave was and looked under the hood of the car. Sam and Denise had been friends with Dave and Susan ever since they moved in. Both Dave and Susan were sweet and friendly people. Denise had been the one to go over and break the ice. Sam was not so social and felt awkward meeting people for the first time. But ever since they had got together for a double dinner date, things had become easy. Sam and Dave were now good friends, and so were Susan and Denise.

“Well,” he said to Dave inquiringly, “what seems to be the problem this time?”

“I don’t really know,” replied Dave. “It was running just fine earlier. We didn’t have a problem this morning when we left for work or when we drove home this afternoon. Susan was getting out stuff to fix dinner for tonight and said she needed me to run to the store to pick up a couple of things for her. When I came out and turned the key, it just didn’t start.”

“It didn’t make any noises or strange sounds, or anything like that?”

"No, nothing," answered Dave. "The starter didn't click, no power from the battery, no lights in the dashboard, nothing."

Sam climbed into the driver's seat and turned the key in the ignition.

"Huh," he mumbled, "you're right. There's nothing."

"Well," said Dave, "what do you think it could be?"

"Well, I'm not really sure," answered Sam slowly. "Let's see, we just put a new battery in last week, so that should still be good; unless, of course, your alternator is the problem and isn't keeping your battery fully charged."

"Are you and Denise going to come with us to church on Sunday?" asked Dave. "It's going to be a special service with a barbecue afterward."

"No, I really don't think so," answered Sam. "You know that we have been going to church, almost every week, at the United Friendship Church."

"Well," said Dave, "you know you and Denise are always welcome to our church."

"Well, your church is really very friendly to everyone and all," replied Sam, "but your preacher is always harping on the need to be saved and that you can know for sure that you're going to Heaven, and I don't believe that you can really know for sure about anything. You just do the best that you can, live by the 'Golden rule' and the 'Ten Commandments' and hope that in the end, the good in your life outweighs the bad."

"But the Bible teaches us that you can be sure," Dave told him. "Romans 10:13 says: whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, not 'might be' saved, but 'shall be' saved. Romans 10:9 says: if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved."

"Well, that's okay for you," said Sam, "but Pastor Glenn Nelson teaches that all roads lead to Heaven and that Jesus is just one of those ways."

"But," insisted Dave, "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me.'"

This was not a rare conversation. Whenever the two families got together, somehow, the topic would always come to religion. Dave and Susan were very religious. They participated in all the church's events. They went to church regularly and preached to as many as they could. They had left their high-paying jobs to take up teaching positions at the Church and both were happy with this decision. For Sam, this would sometimes be irritating as he didn't like defending his position on religion again and again. But Dave was a master at preaching, and always knew Sam's limits. He would push only as far as Sam could take and then he would quickly

change the subject when he thought Sam had had enough.

At that moment, Susan stepped out of the house and asked, "Hey Sam, are you going to be able to get the car started for us anytime soon? I really need for him to go to the store and get some spices for the dinner I'm fixing."

Sam looked at Susan and answered, "I'm not sure how long it's going to take. I haven't been able to find anything wrong with the alternator or the generator, or the solenoid; maybe the problem is in the ignition switch. Why don't you just call Denise? She might have what you need in our kitchen."

"That's a good idea," replied Susan, "then maybe you both can join us for dinner. I'm cooking enough for all of us. I'll go and call her right now."

"Well," continued Dave, returning to his subject, "you do believe the Bible, don't you?"

"I believe that the Bible has some really good teachings in it, but how can we know for sure that it hasn't been changed over all the years," asked Sam. "Besides, it was just written by men like you and me."

"You do realize, don't you," said Dave, "that there are over twenty thousand different copies of the Scriptures that all translate the same, and not only that but every time they happen to find a new copy in some archaeological dig in the Middle East, it always translates the same as what we already have. Besides, the Bible teaches that the 'Scriptures came not in the old times by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.' Second Timothy 3:16 also says: 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God', or in other words that it was God-breathed, 'and that is profitable for teaching, reproof, and correction.' Don't you believe that Jesus was the son of God?"

"I believe," replied Sam, "that Jesus was a good man, who tried to teach us how to live a good life, but that he just happened to get the wrong people mad at him, and they had him killed."

"You know Jesus claimed to be God, don't you?" asked Dave. "He said that he came to earth to die for our sins so we wouldn't have to spend eternity in hell separate from God?"

"I don't happen to think that a loving God is going to send a good person to hell," insisted Sam. "In fact, I'm not even that convinced that there really is a hell that we can be sent to."

At that precise moment, Denise walked into the garage carrying some packages of spice for Susan and asked: "Hey Sam, who are you talking to?"

Sam looked up from under the hood and answered: "Dave was just

inviting us to church again, and I was just telling him that we go to our own church and will probably be there on Sunday if nothing else comes up."

"Where is Dave?"

Sam, looking surprised, glanced around the garage and said, "I don't know. He was right here. He must have stepped into the house just before you walked in. Are those the spices Susan needed?"

"Yeah, she called to see if I had some, and I told her I'd bring them over," replied Denise.

"Well, let's go in. Be ready for anything. They're on a Jesus kick tonight," warned Sam.

"I thought they might be by the way Susan was talking. Well, we go."

As they walked into the house, Susan and Dave were nowhere to be found. "Susan! Dave!" they called out, but no one answered.

"Looks like they went somewhere in a really big hurry," observed Denise. "Susan didn't even bother to turn the stove off, and it looks like dinner has already started to burn. Why don't you go and look around the house and see if you can find them while I turn the stove off?"

Sam went through the entire house, then came back to the kitchen and said: "There's nobody here."

"Are you sure? Did you check everywhere?" Susan asked quizzically.

"Yup! I sure did. It's like they just vanished." Sam was just as perplexed as she was. Two people can't just disappear into thin air. Even on foot, they couldn't have gotten very far. And why would they? The dinner was on the stove; the car wasn't working. He just couldn't make any sense of it all. He looked at Susan and saw his confusion mirrored in her eyes.

"There's something wrong here, honey," Susan said, confusion giving way to fear.

"Well, let's go home and wait for them to give us a call." Sam wished he was as confident as he tried to sound.

"Just let me get my tools, and then I'll close the garage door."

Chapter 6

Aftermath

Penny Wellington rolled over in the bed, gently placing her hand on the shoulder of her sleeping husband, and asked: "Tom, are you awake?"

"I am now."

"We need to finish talking about this."

"I thought we had finished talking."

"Please, this is very important to me."

"Okay," responded Tom, "but you already know how I feel."

"Here we go again," he thought. Tom had never been a religious man. He had always preferred science over religion. He was more at ease with concepts that he could discern for himself. Believing in something that was supposed to take him to heaven, even though there was no proof of it was something he found very difficult.

He was fifty five years old and had spent the most part of his life vehemently opposing the religious aspects. It was a miracle that he and Penny were still together. She knew how much he hated the religious folk. He thought that they were just out to make a penny for themselves and hid their greed under robes and behind scriptures. If they wanted money, he thought, they would have to work for it, just like he had all his life.

He was a large man, six foot one in height and quite heavy set. He had always been on the plus size. This had given him a lot of advantage on the football field. In college, he towered over his entire team as well as most of the opposing teams. When he joined the bank, his physique helped him tower over his colleagues and subordinates and gave him an aura of confidence. He had always been good with numbers, and his financial skills coupled with his dominating presence had made it easy for him to reach the level that he was at now. He also had a deep baritone of a voice that sounded like it knew what it was talking about. The only person who wasn't impressed with his appearance was Penny. She had him wrapped around her finger and they both knew it. He loved his wife, even though he thought she was a fool to believe religious hocus pocus about heaven and hell and what not. Tommy, his son, had followed his mother's footsteps and he too was religious to the point of being a zealot. But unlike his mother, he did not have the patience to put up with his father, and that had resulted in quite a few verbal sparring sessions between them.

Tom would try to convince his son that he was on the wrong end of the spectrum, and Tommy would reject all his facts and figures and logic, and

try to convince Tom that he was taking life for granted.

Now, Tommy wanted to be baptized, and he and his mother had told Tom, in no uncertain terms that he had to be there for them. The only problem was that Tom had a full schedule and he didn't want to go in the first place.

"I wish you would change your mind and come to church on Sunday with Tommy and me," she said. "Tommy really wants you to be there. He's going to be baptized, and he wants you to be there for him."

Tom looked over at his wife and said, "I'm a senior vice president in charge of international loans at the London branch of the World Bank, and I really don't have the time to spend in church. Besides, you know how I feel about church. They're nothing but a bunch of self-righteous hypocrites. I work with a lot of people like that all week; people who claim that they are Christians, but they can cuss and tell dirty jokes with the best of them. In fact, I have heard some of them tell the dirtiest jokes I have ever heard. And you know very well that I let you drag me to church services both last Easter and last Christmas. I didn't enjoy the services at all. It felt like the pastor was talking right to me, like he knew that I was there. It felt like he was criticizing everything that I like to do for entertainment and to relax."

"He couldn't have been specifically talking about you," replied Penny. "He doesn't even know you that well, much less any of the things that you happen to like. I think that the Lord was just dealing with you and that you were just feeling convicted by the Holy Spirit. I just think that you don't want to admit that you need Jesus in your life."

"Hey," insisted Tom. "I'm a good person, and I do my best to be both a loving husband to you and a good father to Tommy; isn't that good enough? We also give money to charities, and you pay your tithes to the church. I don't think that I need someone to come down and die from my sins. I think I am quite capable of getting to Heaven just fine on my own. I don't cheat or steal, and I certainly have never killed anybody; sure, I have told a lie or two in my lifetime, but really who hasn't?"

"Tom," answered Penny, "if we could get to Heaven by our own efforts, then why did Jesus have to come down to earth and die for us? If a perfect sacrifice didn't have to be made to pay for all of our sins, then that was just a waste of time and effort on the part of God."

"The Bible says: 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.' Why do you think Jesus felt it was necessary to be beaten and have the crown of thorns placed on his head? Why do you think he let the Roman soldiers spit on him and whip him with the cat of nine tails, not to mention his willingly going to the cross? He was God in human flesh. He could have put a stop to all of it at any time, but he didn't. Think about

that," she added as she rolled back over to her side of the bed.

"I'm glad that you and Tommy are enjoying going to church every week," replied Tom, "but you know that I don't feel like it is something for me. I just always feel so uncomfortable when I let you drag me there."

As he finished speaking, he noticed that an eerie silence had filled the room. After a few moments, he started to roll over and said: "hey, I don't want you to be mad at me, Penny."

But she was no longer lying there. He shook his head, rolled back over to his side, and sat upon the edge of the bed. Slowly he stood up and started walking over to the bedroom door, opened it, and went out into the hallway.

"Penny, where did you go? Are you mad because I don't want to go to church with you and Tommy on Sunday?"

He walked down the hallway to Tommy's room and opened the door, and looked inside to see if she was in there. He noticed that even Tommy was no longer in his bed.

"Tommy, Penny, where are you?"

He started walking through the entire apartment, turning on the lights and opening doors. Still, neither Penny nor Tommy were anywhere to be found.

"Tommy, Penny," he repeated, but no one was there to answer him back.

He was all alone.

Jean Perkins, a pediatric nurse assigned to the newborn nursery, stepped off the elevator, and headed back to the nursery after finishing her break. She walked to the nursery door, opened it up, and went inside.

"I think it's your turn to go eat something now," she said as she walked over to the baby cart containing Johnson, a smiling baby boy.

"I bet you can't wait to see your mommy right about now. Now that you're clean and your blood has been drawn, and all of your vitals have been taken, I think that it's time for someone to go and get something to eat."

Jean slowly moved the baby's cart out of its place in front of the viewing window and moved it over to the nursery room door to take the baby to his mother's room.

"Let's go see mommy," she cooed as she opened the door and headed

out into the hallway. As she turned to make sure the door closed properly, she noticed Dr. John Kelly, the doctor who had delivered Johnson earlier that morning, walking down the hallway towards them. As he walked up, she turned back to look at the cart and started to scream with a loud voice.

"The baby, where did the baby go? He was just here a second ago!"

Dr. Kelly hurriedly reached out and tried to calm her down and asked, "What's wrong, Jean, what in the world is it?"

"It's the baby!" she cried. "I was just taking him down to his mother's room so she could feed him, and now he's disappeared. I only looked away from the cart for a moment, just long enough to close the nursery room door, and now look. He's not here, and I don't know where he is."

"Calm down, Jean," said Dr. Kelly in the most reassuring voice he could manage to muster.

"You probably just grabbed the wrong cart and then came out without bringing the baby. Let's go back to the nursery, and you'll see for yourself; it's going to be all right."

"No, I didn't bring out the wrong cart," insisted Jean. "I was just tickling his foot right before I turned to close the door, and now he's gone. See, take a look right there. Here is the name tag that reads, baby boy Johnson and feel down here, the mattress and bedding are still warm from his body heat."

Realizing that something was horribly wrong, yet wanting to put on a veneer of confidence to prevent the nurse from panicking, Dr. Kelley said, "Let's go on back into the nursery anyway and just make certain there hasn't been any mix-up. It's going to be okay."

As they reentered the nursery, they were both stunned by what they saw. Jean cried out, "Look, Dr. Kelly, all the other babies are missing as well! Where could they have all gone?"

Nurse Perkin's body suddenly began shaking uncontrollably as she began shouting out in a wildly hysterical voice, "This can't be happening. All of the babies are gone. How could this happen? What is going on around here? No, No, No."

Dr. Kelley immediately grabbed her by her arms and held them tightly to her side. He told her, in as calm a voice as possible, "We're going to find out what has happened. There has to be a rational, logical explanation."

Nurse Julia Parish watched as the orderly wheeled Mr. Newman's gurney into the operating room for his surgery.

"How are we feeling today, Mr. Newman?" she asked.

"I'm feeling pretty groggy."

"That's perfectly natural," replied nurse Parish. "That's the sedative starting to take effect. Now we're just going to move you over to the operating table, and Dr. Nelson will be right in to take care of you."

"Okay," said Mr. Newman.

While Mr. Newman was being moved, Dr. Webster, the anesthesiologist, bowed his head and said a quick prayer for the surgery to go well, then started administering the anesthesia.

As Mr. Newman dropped off, Dr. Nelson came in and put on his surgical gloves. He turned to nurse Parish and asked her for the scalpel. When she began to hand it to him, she suddenly noticed something was not right. She screamed and pointed to where Mr. Newman should have been and said: "he's gone!"

Dr. Nelson turned around and said: "what in the world is happening here?"

Then nurse Parish cried out again: "Where's Dr. Webster? He's gone too!"

At other hospitals all around the world, people were terrified. Patients, doctors, and nurses just vanished right in front of their coworkers.

On St. Louis to New York flight, flight attendant Patsy Jacobs came bursting into the cockpit to tell the pilot, John Jefferson, that passengers had disappeared in midflight, only to find that the pilot and co-pilot were both missing as well. The plane would continue on autopilot, but as it came close to its destination, the system would disengage, and as the plane ran out of fuel, it would eventually plunge to the earth. There was nothing anyone could do.

On Interstate Highway 10, a young couple was driving in their car as the woman turned around in her seat to give her baby in the backseat his bottle, only to discover that her young son was missing from his car seat. She yelled over to her husband, who was driving the car, "Charlie, its little Jimmy, he's missing!"

Charlie quickly took a look around to see what was going on, and by doing so, he failed to notice as a driverless vehicle started to swerve into his lane.

The couple would only be two of thousands who would be killed on the highways that night.

"Have any of you seen Lee Chang?" asked Chen Wang to the other guards on duty.

"I think I saw him heading over that way, you know, over where we are keeping all of the prisoners they picked up last week in the raid on that illegal house church in the Quizon district," replied one of the guards.

"He sure seems to be spending a lot of time down there with them," observed Chen Wang. "Is it just me, or have any of you noticed a difference in him lately?"

"I don't know," said the other guard again. "Lee is Lee, but wait, now that you mention it, he does seem a little different lately, kind of like he's got a lot on his mind. And he's been questioning some of his orders lately when it comes to some of the prisoners."

"I don't know," added another guard, "but I thought he had been a lot happier the last few days myself."

"Yeah, maybe you're right. He didn't seem as brooding yesterday or today like he usually does," noted the other guard.

"Well," said Chen Wang, "whatever it is, you need to go and get him; he is wanted in the front office for something."

"Okay," replied the second guard, "I'll go get him right now."

The guard slowly headed off to the cell block, but a moment later, he came running back. He was visibly shaken and out of breath. "They're all gone!" he cried.

"Calm down," insisted Chen Wang, "who's gone, what are you babbling about?"

"All of the new prisoners, and also Lee Chang, they're all gone," answered the guard.

"What do you mean gone?" said Chen Wang. "Have they all escaped? Did Lee Chang help them get away?"

"It's not possible," insisted the guard. "There is only one way out of the cell bay, and it goes right past us here, but there is nobody in the cells."

All of the guards ran down to double-check the cell bay and found no one was there.

"What are we going to tell the head office?" asked Chen Wang.

"They're waiting for Lee Chang right now."

All over the world, people just suddenly vanished some right in front of other people who became very terrified by the occurrence. TV. news broadcasts start to go out over the airwaves, reporting on all of the disappearances.

Reports also came in of chaotic scenes all over the world. Automobile crashes due to being driverless, planes falling of the sky, commuter trains crashing as no one was in the cab to slow them down. All of these crashes resulted in wide-scale power outages as many of them crashed into power poles, bringing down transformers.

In every city around the world, people began calling police stations. In mental hospitals everywhere, some of the patients were missing from the floors, prisoners who were attending the Prison Fellowship services, and even some, who were on death row, vanished from the cell blocks. As a result, riots ensued as the prisoners quickly and easily took advantage of the chaos and overwhelmed the remaining guards.

Nobody had a reasonable explanation for what was happening.

As the panic grew, people began flowing into different local churches around the world, looking for some answers; only to find, in many instances, some worried pastors who feared that the worst has happened. They were afraid that in their efforts to make the Bible more acceptable and less offensive to everyone, they had failed to deliver the truth to their congregations. By doing so, they caused many to be left behind.

Ambulances, fire trucks, police, and other first responders were rushing everywhere, responding to crashes and massive injuries. Emergency rooms were flooded with hurt and dying people while being seriously understaffed due to many of their own people being among the missing.

All of this began occurring at the exact same moment all of the bombs started going off around the U.S., and Washington, D.C. was being destroyed. People fearing the worst begin crying out to God, but it was too late.

Chapter 7

What Next

The first angel sounded...and the third part of the trees burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

The second angel sounded...and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

The third angel sounded...and the third part of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter.

The fourth angel sounded...and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

The fifth angel sounded...there came out of the smoke locusts...given power, as the scorpions...that they should be tormented...in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it;

The sixth angel sounded...the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. Rev. 8:7- 9:15

...a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; (a day's wage)

Rev. 6:6

Sam and Denise came home, completely baffled. How could two people just disappear like that? They had to be somewhere. As they entered the house, Denise went to put the spices back in the pantry, and Sam made a beeline for the television. He had to check the news. "So," asked Sam, "what are we going to do for dinner now?" He tried to insert some normalcy into the situation.

"I don't know," replied Denise. "I really don't feel like cooking. I was actually looking forward to Susan preparing the meal. I guess I'll check and see what I can fix."

"Okay. I've kind of lost my appetite right now. I think I'm just going to turn on the news and see what's happening."

As he turned on the evening news, a special report came on

talking about the nuclear bomb that had exploded in Washington, DC.

“What did the news say?” asked Denise, as she hurried into the room. “Did I hear them correctly? Did they really say that a nuclear bomb went off in DC?”

“Yeah, they did,” replied Sam, with a stunned look on his face. “They said the president was addressing a special joint session of Congress. They think that the president, vice president, as well as everyone in both houses of Congress and the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff, may have been either killed in the explosion or by all the radiation.”

“Wait a moment; there’s more. Truck bombs have gone off simultaneously in several different state capitals around the United States. It seems that Albany, Sacramento, Springfield, Austin, and several other state capitals have all been devastated. We even had a bomb go off here in Tallahassee. They think it might be a continuation of the attack Iran pulled off against Israel this morning.”

“What are we going to do?” asked Denise.

“I don’t know,” said Sam. “It looks like the terrorists had everything planned. I don’t really know how we’re going to respond to them, especially if the entire federal government has been completely wiped out.”

The newscast went on to talk about the disappearances of thousands and thousands of people all over the world. It also told about all the terrible crashes and utter chaos that was still going on. Then the reporter proceeded to warn people that they should stay at home and off the streets to avoid all the accidents.

“Boy,” observed Sam, “It’s a complete mess out there. I don’t know if we will be able to recover from it all.”

Sam and Denise soon forgot about having anything to eat and stayed glued to the special report. They learned that much of the country was without power, seemingly due to an attack on the electrical grid. Miraculously, they seemed to have been spared from the disaster affecting the rest of the country.

After several hours of watching the news reports, they decided to fix a small snack, go to bed, and plan to get more information about what had happened the next morning. After a lot of tossing and turning around in bed, they were both finally able to fall asleep for a few troubling hours.

Tom began to get nervous. While he and Penny had fights, just like any other married couple, she had never left home before. Especially in the middle of the night, and what about Tommy? How could she possibly have

gotten them dressed without waking him up?

He then did what seemed like the most logical step. He picked up his cell phone and dialed 999, the British version of 911. However, he received the same ominous message that all circuits were busy. After trying for nearly an hour, Tom realized he would not be able to get through. Not willing to believe what had happened, his mind was in a daze as if he was living some horrible nightmare.

He gradually realized that he needed to do something to find out what happened to his wife and son. He walked outside, looking for any signs that might provide clues as to what had happened and who had done this. Once outside, he noticed his next-door neighbor's house was unlocked, and the door was ajar. Wondering if this could possibly be related to what happened to Penny and Tommy, he decided to go over and investigate.

As he got closer, he noticed the garage door was also opened. "Something is definitely not right," Tom thought. Then he saw someone moving around inside.

"Hey, what are you doing there," Tom shouted out.

Startled, the intruder, a young man in his mid-20s, got up to quickly leave the house.

Normally, Tom would've let the perpetrators go as he 'didn't fancy himself a hero and was typically nonviolent by nature. However, in this instance, rage and fear overwhelmed him. He rushed over and tackled the intruder.

The young man was caught off guard as the two of them collided with the metal trash cans in the garage. Reeling from the impact, the intruder was momentarily defenseless. Tom sat down on top of him and began brutally punching him in the face.

"What have you done with my wife and son," he kept shouting as he punched the guy. "The two of them were sleeping in our house, and now they're gone. What kind of a sick, perverted person are you to do such a thing? Why did you do it? Where are they, you sick...."

"Hold on, man," the person replied, trying to protect his already bruised face.

"I didn't do anything. I just saw the garage door open and figured I'd see what I can get before all the others do. I wouldn't hurt nobody, I swear."

Tom looked at his bloody hands, trying to regain his composure, then said, "What do you mean all of the others."

"Where have you been? People are missing all over, regular folks, police,

ambulance drivers, men, women, children, everybody. People are rioting all over. I just figured this is a good time to get some free stuff. I figured I'd check this place out; after all, it is a free-for-all. I just want my fair share."

It was then that Tom realized that something much bigger was happening. For the first time, he heard the sound of windows breaking and squealing tires. He was shocked that he hadn't noticed it before. Then, off in the distance, he saw several fires as homes burned furiously. Despite the intensity of the blazes, he was shocked at the surprising lack of emergency response to the fire.

He looked across the street to see a group of youths storming in and ransacking his house. While similar types of riots occurred following events such as the New York City blackout, the Rodney King verdict, or Hurricane Katrina, these all happened in urban environments in the inner city, not out here in the suburbs. The mob consisted of people of every ethnicity and skin color, a virtual United Nations of rioters.

Across the street, he noticed his neighbor, Mr. Hernandez, lying dead, a shovel in his hand, which he apparently used in a vain attempt to defend his home. Hernandez was a Hispanic immigrant who had fled from the death squads in Nicaragua.

As the mob came closer to him with blood in their eyes, Tom realized he had seconds to decide what to do. He decided to make a painful choice.

"Come on, get up, he told the young man. "You're right. Let's see what we can get."

The two of them entered the house. The truth is, Tom had no intention of stealing anything from his friend's house, even though he knew where many of their valuables were kept. Instead, he reasoned if he could demolish and smash some of the obviously valuable items such as the flat-screen TV in the living room, the mob might see the devastation and leave the house alone, reasoning everything of importance had already been taken. Even if they saw him, they would assume he was simply one of them and hopefully leave him alone. He only hoped that when they came over, none of them would have the mental clarity to associate his face with the pictures of his family in the house next door.

Acting in a maddened frenzy as David did before the King of Gath when he clawed at the door and allowed spittle to run down his face, Tom pretended to enjoy the madness.

After breaking the plasma TV and overturning the entertainment center, he knocked over the bookshelves and furniture in an attempt to make the destruction seem worse than it actually was. Then he went to the bedrooms and did the same thing, taking out drawers and opening them while scattering the contents all over the room. He then overturned the beds and

even took a baseball bat and smashed the toilet bowl.

Then he went to the kitchen and hurriedly emptied the refrigerator, tossing all of the food items on the floor. The glass jars broke open, creating a strange concoction of pickles and jams. Then struggling, he pushed the refrigerator on its side. As he continued with the destruction, Tom became uneasy when he noticed he was actually beginning to enjoy the destruction he was causing. He had never backed away from a fight, but this was the first time that he was really enjoying being aggressive and brutal. He knew that he had a mean streak in him. It would surface sometimes when he would go up against one of the other VPs in the company, but never like this. 'I am learning so much about myself,' he thought.

As he looked up, he saw a scout from the mob. His plan appeared to be working as none of them tried to stop his tirade. After doing a cursory inspection, the scout seemed satisfied that the home had been cleaned out already. He then turned to leave and motioned to the mob to move on to the next house, which looked more promising. Tom was shocked that his plan had worked so well since, despite his efforts, there were still plenty of items that would've proven attractive to an ambitious thief.

Tom continued with the charade of being a part of the crowd for the next few hours in an attempt at self-preservation. He found it hard to play along at first, especially when he watched the mob enter and destroy the homes of neighbors he had known for years. He was shocked that many of the rioters were people he had never seen before. It was evident they had come from somewhere outside of his neighborhood.

He watched as the crowd went to Joe Wilson's home. The house was four houses down from his. Mr. Wilson was an old war veteran who had fought in many battles. His patriotism was always on display for the entire neighborhood to see. In his yard, he had a flagpole that displayed the Union Jack.

Wilson was standing on his porch with an old 10-gauge shotgun in hand. While Britain had some of the world's most stringent gun laws, shotguns were not as well-regulated.

He shouted at the mob, "Go away, you rebels! You might get other people's stuff, but you're not going to get mine. I fought enemies that make you look like a bunch of Cub Scouts, now go on, get out of here."

Tom could see that despite Joe's bluster, the crowd was not intimidated. While he might kill a few of them at best, ultimately, he would be overrun by the sheer weight of the mob.

Tom was horrified when his prophecy proved to be correct. The mob seemed oblivious to the shotgun in Joe's hand and moved towards him. To

the old warrior's credit, he was able to get off two shots, cutting down several of the crowd, some of whom were almost cut in half by the buckshot in the powerful weapon that thundered forth death.

Despite the blood being their own, it seemed to merely excite the crowd as they lunged at the old war dog with a murderous rage that seemed similar to that of a rabid dog that needed to be put down. Yanking the gun from Joe's hand, the first member of the mob to survive the deadly barrage took it and began to savagely beat him with it until Joe's face became a bloody mess that looked more like ground meat than a human being. The rest of the mob joined in and started kicking and beating Joe.

Carried along with the wave motion of the mob, Tom found himself yelling out in a ferocious roar: "Let's go, guys. I bet there's a whole bunch of booty in here," as he made it a point to stomp his feet on his neighbor's dead body deliberately. Where is this coming from, he thought. I'm not like that. I've never been like that. Yes, I've never been religious, but I have always respected human life. Why is the mob affecting me like this? His mind came up with the perfect answer. Tom at first reasoned that his actions were perfectly reasonable. After all, the man was already dead, and he could not do anything to help him. It was every man for himself, and Tom told himself he needed to do this if he was ever to have any hope of surviving and finding out what happened to his beloved family.

Then the words he had spoken to Penny a few hours ago returned to haunt him: "I 'don't think that I need someone to come down and die from my sins, I think I am quite capable of getting to heaven just fine on my own. I 'don't cheat or steal, and I certainly have never killed anybody."

The next morning after Sam and Denise woke up, she hurriedly fixed some breakfast and then turned on the television to find out what else happened during the night.

As they flipped through the channels to see if they could find out any new information, they came across a reporter interviewing a local pastor. He was telling her that he believed what happened could be summed up with five words: the rapture of the church. He said that he felt this was the best explanation he could come up with to explain all of the chaos and missing people. He explained that the cars, trucks, and planes probably crashed when the drivers, who were Christians, disappeared, causing the vehicles to careen out of control.

"Why did you not disappear with the rest of the Christians?" the reporter asked.

The pastor smiled, but a deep sense of sadness lurked in his eyes. He said, "Perhaps I was wrong in my interpretation of the Bible. Maybe my

teachings were just too liberal, and I had not believed the Bible as written.”

The pastor went quiet for a moment, then cleared his throat and added, "I am very ashamed of myself for that." He looked straight into the camera then said in a hoarse voice, "I am also afraid that my teaching may have led many different people to their doom. I just don't know how I will face anybody now."

Tears pooled in the pastor's eyes, and he turned away from the camera.

"Hey," observed Denise. "That's Pastor Glenn from our church. He is saying that the rapture has occurred. What do you think?"

"I don't know what to think," replied Sam, shaking his head. "This is by far the worst situation that we've ever been in. There's nothing in history that can prepare us for it."

"Maybe we should go over to the church and have a talk with him," suggested Denise. "Maybe he can shed some light on what has happened."

After seeing Pastor Glenn on the television, Denise wondered what he was saying. She then thought about all the talks she had with Susan and her cousin Penny. She decided to try and call her cousin in London.

When she called, at first, she heard a series of error messages telling her all circuits were busy, but then after a few minutes, the call connected but went to voice mail. Denise then tried to call Penny's husband.

Sam was deep in thought. There were a host of thoughts attacking his mind from every direction. Had Dave been right all along? Sam had ignored all Dave's attempts to bring him to church. Is this it for me and Susan? Are we not getting into heaven? What if there's another completely reasonable and logical explanation for all of this? What if it's a biological weapon that only took the people who had a specific set of markers in their bodies or blood streams? Whatever it was, he had to find out the truth.

Tom was deep in thought about the events of the night before, feelings of guilt overwhelming him as the thought about the despicable acts he partook in last night. To him, it seemed like something from the Lord of the Flies. Suddenly the phone rang, startling him out of his trance.

Tom quickly answered the phone, hoping it was Penny calling to talk about the argument they had the night before and to let him know where she and Tommy were. He looked at the phone and realized that it was Denise. Denise asked for Penny, and Tom told her about the argument they had the night before. He broke down in tears as he told her about the riots and how their own home had been vandalized by roving mobs. He did not say a word about the events at Mr. Wilson's house.

Denise told him about the attacks on Washington, DC, and all around the country. Tom decided that he needed to go into the city to find out what was happening. If what Denise said was correct, the world's financial institutions would soon be in for a shock.

Chapter 8

Looming Disaster

Sam and Denise turned off the television and got dressed. They got in their car and drove over to the United Friendship Church. They needed answers, and it was the only place they could think of right now. When they arrived, they found the front doors were open. They headed inside to see if they could locate him. They saw him in the back of the sanctuary, on his knees in front of the altar. He was crying out to God, asking for forgiveness. He was utterly devastated about how he was so wholly deceived and how he had led his congregation astray.

As Sam and Denise approached him, Pastor Glenn looked around, stood up, and cried: "Oh no, not you two as well. How many more, oh Lord? How many have I led astray from your truth? How many souls have I helped to condemn to hell by not believing the truth of your word as it was written and not teaching it your way? I know now that thy word is truth, help me to correct all of my ways and to help anyone that has been left by you that I can."

As they looked at the man who had been their pastor for the past few years, they were stunned by what they saw. They were used to seeing him wearing a neatly cleaned Brooks Brothers suit with his hair kept perfectly in place. During services, he portrayed an aura of confidence as he spoke to his congregation. During church fellowships, he was always so cool and collected. The individual they saw in front of them seemed to be a completely different person.

This person was wearing a wrinkled shirt that looked as if it had not been changed for a couple of days. He appeared tired and disheveled, as if he had not slept or showered recently. This whimpering, crying individual, a broken shell of a man, was a completely different person.

It wasn't always like this. There was a time when Pastor Glenn had fire in his belly and eyes that could look into your soul and see your deepest, darkest secrets. When he was just a boy, he had decided that he wanted to become a pastor. He was an orphan who had opened his eyes in an orphanage. From there, he had been transferred to a ministry where he went to school and learned different skills. From a very young age, he had found that God was the only one he found comfort in. He would see the priests praying, helping others, fasting, and he wanted to become like them. He wanted a closer relationship with God. He wanted to study at His feet, see His glory, and feel His presence.

As time progressed, he became one of the few students who excelled at everything. His teachers had high hopes for him. And then finally, the day came when he became a pastor and got his own church. He was very proud that day, and maybe that was the start of his downfall. Slowly and gradually, he had fallen down the abyss of technology, science, and rationale. He somehow thought that if he didn't reach the people the way they wanted to be reached, he would be doing them an injustice.

Pastor Glenn had started his own social media campaign and it was a huge success. People from all over the world were liking and sharing his content and praising him. He felt like he was at the top of the world. He finally had everything he wanted. But then things started to change in earnest. Somehow, the medium of his message had become the message itself. He could feel it in his bones. He had somehow lost the path, and though the realization dawned on him, he was too far gone to retrace his steps to the origin. He couldn't turn back. And now he was part of the ones left behind. Sam's voice brought him back from his reverie.

"Pastor Glenn is it really true?" asked Sam. "Did the rapture really occur last evening? Were we really left out of it? Is there anything that we can do now?"

Pastor Glenn stood up as he wiped the tears from his face. It was obvious that he had been weeping for hours as rivers of salt were caked onto his cheeks. "I really don't know the answer to that," he said, his voice heavy with grief and guilt.

"I have been up all night studying the scriptures, trying to find answers, and I'm afraid it looks like that. I can also tell you that the worst of it is not over yet. If what happened last night really was The Rapture, then things are going to start getting a whole lot worse over the next few years."

"Whatever do you mean?" asked Denise. "What could possibly be worse than being left behind by God when He comes for His people?"

"Well," answered Pastor Glenn thoughtfully. "Now that the church has been removed from the earth, God's hand of protection is going to be removed. Satan is going to be given free rein to do whatever evil he wants to do. With all the chaos that has been occurring, just since last night, what with all the attacks and the disappearances of millions of people, the world is going to be in a major panic mode. I am also willing to bet that in just a few days or weeks, we will start to see the emergence of someone who claims that he has all the answers to our problems. He will then call for the entire world to unite under a new one-world government with him in control of everything."

"Are you talking about the Antichrist?"

"Yes, I am. He is going to rule over the entire world for the next seven

years, before the second coming of Jesus Christ. Oh, at first, everything will probably seem just great and the best thing that could possibly ever happen to the world. He is going to bring a false peace to the world and will make a peace treaty with Israel, but it won't last for very long."

"The Bible says that during that time, the next seven years, God is going to start pouring out His judgment on the world, and then things are going to go from bad to worse. The Bible says that there will be plagues, famine, and earthquakes all over the world that will kill a third of the world's population. There will be all kinds of natural catastrophes, and a third of all the creatures in the oceans are going to die as well, and the waters of the earth are going to be contaminated. The Bible also says that the food supply will be so scarce that a loaf of bread will cost a whole day's wages, leading to the Antichrist putting a mark of some kind on everyone, either on their right hands or their foreheads. Nobody will be able to buy or sell anything if they don't have that mark, so he will be in complete control of the world's money supply."

"How will that ever be possible? There are so many different countries in the world and so many different kinds of money in all of those countries. With the electrical grid being down, how can people pay bills without electronic banking? Do you think that any country on earth is going to accept any money other than its own if there is all this widespread panic you're talking about?"

"Maybe he will try to initiate a cashless society," responded Pastor Glenn. "A lot of people today rely more on their debit cards than they do on their money. You can swipe your debit card just about anywhere and everywhere these days. I have seen all kinds of commercials on television lately where they are pushing the use of the debit card as being faster and easier than actually using cash. They try to make people who actually use hard currency to pay for anything that they purchase look like they're causing everything around them to come to a screeching halt. I admit having no power is certainly going to be an obstacle. I suppose it will depend on how long it takes to get things somewhat back to normal, whatever that means anymore."

"Yeah," agreed Sam. "Denise, haven't you noticed at work that all the vending machines now have a debit card reader on them? You don't even have to have any money with you in order to buy a Coke or candy. All you have to do is swipe your card. It's the same with all the groceries, malls, and everywhere else. We have already entered a cashless world. Whatever effort is remaining, I guess this will be enough."

"I hadn't really been paying that much attention to it," noted Denise. "But now that you mention it, I do think I remember Carol Jennings saying something about how convenient everything was getting down in the break room. She said that she didn't even have to carry any change with her

anymore.”

“Well,” said Pastor Glenn. “It’s not as far-fetched as you might have thought it was just a few minutes ago, huh? If you are going to use a debit card connected to your personal bank account, what does it matter what kind of currency you’re using? The process is happening electronically, so no actual money has to change hands. A computer program is probably being used to constantly make calculations for all the exchange rates among all the different currencies being used by everyone.”

“But what if you lose or just happen to forget your card?” asked Denise. “What will you do then? Do you still use your money or checks, or will you have to do without the things you wanted to buy?”

Something just clicked in Sam’s mind. He was getting the big picture now. It was all making sense.

“Oh,” replied Sam. “I’m pretty sure that’s all going to be a thing of the past real soon anyway.”

“What do you mean?” asked Pastor Glenn.

"Ana-chip is working on integrating their microchip into something that can be implanted into people," Sam explained. "We don't have all the kinks worked out yet, but it probably won't be very long until we do. They're not talking about using it to control the money system right now. They're only talking about having access to all of your medical records for emergencies, but once it's up and running, I bet it wouldn't be all that hard to adapt a system like that for whatever someone wanted it to do. You said something about having a mark on either the right-hand or forehead, didn't you?"

“Yes,” replied Pastor Glenn. “That’s what the Bible says.”

"Well," said Sam. "The chip is about the size of a grain of rice, and if all, or at least most, of the rejection factors can be worked out, it wouldn't be hard to place under the skin. Doing that could possibly leave a mark of some kind.

“But would all the banking systems in the world cooperate with each other?”

“I don’t think they would have to,” responded Denise. “I have a cousin, had a cousin,” she quickly corrected herself, “whose husband is the Vice President of International Loans at the London branch of the World Bank. If the Antichrist gets control of the United Nations, he could probably use the World Bank to run the system. I think they have branches in just about every country in the world.”

"Now, this is all getting really creepy for me," said Pastor Glenn. "I

really had no idea that we were already actually so close to being able to implement all of this. The signs of the times really were all around us all the time already, and none of us ever paid much attention to them at all."

"So who do you think the Antichrist is going to turn out to be? If everything is going to come about as fast as you seem to think it will, shouldn't he already be someone of importance, someone in power somewhere in the world so that people will be more willing to listen to him?"

"You could be right about that. Maybe it's somebody already in power, like the Secretary-General of the United Nations."

"I seriously doubt it," observed Sam. "The United Nations doesn't work all that well with everyone in the world, and I don't think the rogue nations of the world are going to start listening to them now, especially nations like Iran. After all, they just blew off the United Nations and attacked Israel, didn't they? They may have even been behind the attacks here in the United States. I don't think they will all of a sudden start respecting the authority of the United Nations and back down now. They want Israel wiped entirely off the face of the earth. I don't think they're going to allow a peace treaty to be enforced with Israel if they can possibly help it—unless, of course, it's made by somebody who can command their respect and in a real hurry."

"But what kind of a person do you think is going to be able to control Iran and all the other Islamic nations that hate Israel?" asked Denise.

"Not to mention all of the different terrorist organizations like Hamas or al Qaeda or any of the rest of them who keep executing suicide bombing attacks."

"I don't think there is such a person out there right now," said Sam. "He's going to have to be someone who could control all the different factions of the Islamic world and be able to claim more respect from them than anyone else has ever gotten before. At the very least, he certainly is going to have to be able to rein in all of the different mullahs in the Islamic world and bring the Sunnis and the Shiites together into some kind of agreement with each other. That hasn't happened for centuries."

"Well," observed Pastor Glenn, "whoever he is, he's going to have a big job on his hands, but he is going to be controlled by Satan. Let's not forget that, and that will give him a big advantage. All the different factions can be brought together by Satan, and he will do it. The Bible says there will be a one-world government, so you can count on that."

"That's all well and good for the world," noted Denise. "But what's going to happen to us? Are we all going to be doomed to hell now that rapture has occurred?"

“That’s something I have been studying all night. The Bible tells about people who have been sealed by the mark of God who refuse to take the mark of the beast, as it is called, from the Antichrist. The Bible also mentions martyrs who come out of the tribulation, as the next seven years are called in the book of Revelation. They were asking God when He was going to avenge their deaths.”

“So,” said Sam. “You think we still might have a chance to be saved from hell?”

“I’m not sure. I still have a whole lot more studying to do on that subject, but I think that if we call out to God earnestly, ask for His forgiveness and dedicate ourselves to doing His will in our lives and warn others about what lies ahead of all of us, that maybe we could just still have another chance to be saved. But I’m not going to sugar coat it any longer; it will be a rough seven years ahead of us. Will I see the both of you at the church service tomorrow morning? I hope to have a lot more answers to give everyone at that time. I have a feeling we’re going to have a packed house, so try and get here early to get a good seat.”

Before they left the church to go back home, Pastor Glenn led Sam and Denise in prayer to God for forgiveness and dedication of their lives to serve Him no matter what the next seven years will bring.

As they drove back to their home, Sam and Denise noticed that their car was getting low on fuel and started looking for a gas station. Everywhere they went, it seemed that there were long lines, and everybody was trying to top off their tanks, making the problems even worse.

There had been some reports on the news that gasoline supplies were starting to run a little short because several tanker trucks had ended up in severe accidents. There had also been refinery fires, and with the power outages, gasoline and oil were becoming difficult to distribute. The fuel the tanker trucks had been carrying had either burned up in the crash or had spilled onto the ground. People were afraid they wouldn’t have enough fuel to get to work or to the store in the coming days if they didn’t fill up now.

Denise turned to Sam. Biting her lip, she said, “We should probably stop at the supermarket. You know, pick up a few items.”

“Oh, I think we have enough...” Sam began.

Denise cut him off, “I didn’t go to the store this week. We are starting to run low on groceries.”

Sam sighed and nodded. He knew Denise was worried, and he couldn’t fault her for it; he was just as worried. As they tried to pull into the parking lot of the supermarket, they were nearly hit by another car turning in front of them. Everyone seemed in a rush to get to the store first. They circled around the parking lot several times, trying to find a convenient parking

place but ended up parking their car at the far end of the lot. It was jam-packed; so many people were already shopping inside the store.

"What in the world is going on here?" asked Sam. "It's only the first day, and it looks like people are already starting to panic. What are the next seven years going to be like if Pastor Glenn is right about everything?"

"Do you really believe that what he was telling us is true?" inquired Denise.

"I can see the point he's trying to make, but everything is happening so fast that my mind just hasn't had time to absorb everything. All I know is that there are a lot of things happening that cannot be categorized as coincidences. Why, don't you believe him?"

"Well, now that you mention it, there have been a lot of things that have been happening, but I think it does all seem to be fitting together with what the Bible says is going to happen, and I don't want to make another mistake. The last one really cost us a lot."

"You're right. We have to make sure we are following God this time. We just can't afford to make any more mistakes."

As they walked into the store, they found that it was already running low on food items and many shelves were empty. They called to one of the stock clerks on duty and asked him how long it would be before the store's shelves were able to be restocked.

"I can't tell you that for sure," answered the clerk. "We were supposed to be getting a new shipment in late last night, but I heard that the driver was involved in a major traffic accident. The manager doesn't know exactly when the next shipment will make it in either. He thinks that it might take several days, if then."

"Well, we'd better look around and see what we can find for us to eat," noted Denise. "Maybe we can locate some canned foods or boxed dinners to go along with what we already have at home."

"Boy, those shelves were really bare," observed Sam, as they left the store with their groceries. "Let's see, what did we manage to get? Powdered milk, some canned vegetables and fruits, peanut butter and jelly, crackers, and some canned meat. Boy, I haven't eaten food like this since I was in college."

"Hey," replied Denise, "at least we were able to get food, and we still have some cereal and meat in the freezer at home."

"If this is how things are going to be now, what's it going to be like when all the rough times that Pastor Glenn was mentioning start happening? At least we can still afford to eat right now, and there are no

real shortages. Remember that this is just a temporary problem, but it is starting to give me a little bit of an idea of what we're going to have to deal with in the future. The way things are now, I'm sure not looking forward to what will be coming because it is going to be a lot worse than this."

"Well, I think I'd better give Tom a call. I'd better let him know what is going on here and everything that we've found out from Pastor Glenn. I sure hope all of this isn't going to be too overwhelming for him because it certainly has been for me."

Denise picked up the phone and dialed Tom's number in London. She spent the next couple of hours informing him about everything they had been talking to Pastor Glenn about. She also recommended that he go to church the next day and try to make his peace with God.

Despite the riots and the blood on his hands from that night, Tom said he still wasn't convinced the end of the world was approaching, but he did agree that talking to someone at the church might clear up a few things for him.

The next day Sam and Denise arrived early at the church and sat as close to the front of the sanctuary as possible so they could take notes during the sermon. This was a first for them as they usually arrived at the last minute and enjoyed sitting towards the back so they could leave quickly. It wasn't that they didn't like the messages or the people in the church, it was just that their schedules were so busy they barely had time to squeeze in the church service at all. This time they didn't wish to miss out on anything Pastor Glenn had to say. They wanted to follow the Lord as closely as they could.

Chapter 9
The Two Witnesses

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. Rev. 11:3

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth... Rev. 11:5

Messianic prophecies

Prophesied Fulfilled

House of David 2 Sam. 7:12-15 Matt 1:7

Born in Micah 5:2 Matt 2:7

Bethlehem

Taken to Egypt Hosea 11:1 Matt 2:14-15

*Herod's killing Jerem.31:15 Matt 2:16-18
of infants*

*Would perform Isaiah 33:5-6 Matt 9:35
miracle*

*Would cleanse Malachi 3:1 Matt 21:1
the Temple*

*Enter Jerusalem Zech. 9:9 Matt 21:4-9
on a donkey*

*Sold for 30 pieces Zech. 11:1 Matt 26:15
of silver*

*Silent before Isa. 53:7 Matt 27:12-14
accusers*

*Piercing of his Ps 22:16 Matt 27:38
hands & feet*

*No bones would Ps 34:20 John 19:32-36
be broken*

Casting lots for Ps 22:18 John 19:23-24

his garments

Isaac and Rebecca Levinson sat in their hotel room at the Mount Zion Hotel. Both of them were children of Holocaust survivors. Following World War II, their parents had immigrated to Brooklyn. Isaac and Rebecca had grown up together and attended the same synagogue. They were now in their late sixties, yet looking at the joy on their faces, one would have thought they were teenagers who were just about to get on their first roller coaster ride.

They could hardly believe that they had finally arrived in Israel for their long-awaited trip. They had been scrimping and saving for years to be able to afford this trip to their ancestral homeland, and now that they were finally here, they just couldn't believe it.

They had worked hard and saved for many years. Raising seven children had not been cheap for them. Isaac had made a pretty decent living as the head Rabbi at a kosher meatpacking plant in New York. His job was to ensure that all the animals were properly killed to ensure the meat was strictly according to Jewish guidelines. He was raised in a traditional Jewish household. His family had been very proud of the fact that they could trace their lineage all the way back to the time of Solomon, where their ancestors had worked as temple priests.

While that was an amazing accomplishment, Isaac had gone even farther. He had traced his bloodline all the way back to Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, through his son Eleazer. Because of his genealogy, Isaac had always had a fascination with Solomon's temple. He had several drawings and designs and had spent several years constructing a scale model of the temple. He always had a dream that one day he would help rebuild the temple and maybe even serve there as a priest.

During these years, Rebecca had stayed home and made sure the house was kept orderly, the family was fed, and the kids could get a good education. They had enough money for the necessities and even had a little leftover to -occasionally eat out, take a much-needed vacation every year, and buy gifts for everyone on their birthdays and other special occasions.

As the children grew older and graduated from high school, Isaac and Rebecca helped pay for college expenses that were not picked up by the scholarships and school loans they managed to acquire. One by one, the children graduated, got jobs, and eventually got married and had children of their own.

Benjamin was, now, an architect and lived with his wife, Rachel, and their three sons. Daniel was an orthopedic surgeon and lived in New York with his wife, two daughters, and a son. Samuel had followed in his father's footsteps and had taken over the meatpacking plant job after Isaac had retired. He and his wife, Leah, were blessed with twin sons and a beautiful daughter. Joseph, the fourth one, was a lawyer with Goldman, Steinberg, Rothman, and Levinson. He and his wife, Ruth, had a son and another on the way. Elizabeth, Sarah, and Deborah, their three daughters, were happily married and were busy raising their own families.

Finally, the last child had graduated and gone to work. Isaac and Rebecca were finally able to begin putting some money away for that long-awaited trip to Israel. It wasn't going to be a very fancy trip, more of an economy vacation with no frills added. Still, it would be a much-awaited trip to their ancient homeland, and they had been looking forward to it for a very long time.

Isaac had recently retired from the meatpacking plant, and the family was throwing him a party to celebrate. Without telling either Rebecca or Isaac, their children had contacted the travel agency and made some changes to their itinerary.

At the retirement party, Sam said, "Mom, Dad, we have all received so much from both of you over the years. You have each sacrificed so much just to make sure that we would never have to go without anything that we really needed, so now we have all decided to chip in together, and we have made a few little changes to your trip."

Rebecca and Isaac looked at the packet the kids handed to them. They were so surprised that they didn't even know how to respond for several minutes. When they recovered their composure a bit, they tried to protest that the gift was just too expensive and they really couldn't accept it, but the kids wouldn't listen.

"We all chipped in together," Ben said. "We only added things to the original package you had purchased from the travel agency. This is nothing compared to everything that both of you have done for us over the years, and we feel that you deserve this and so much more."

Their five-day no-frills trip that they had originally purchased had been changed to a fourteen-day in-depth Heritage Tour and Eilat with first-class airfare, along with rooms at some very nice hotels in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Isaac sat back on the bed in their suite with a sigh. He thought about how the trip had been going for them so far and how much they had really enjoyed everything over the past week. His mind thought back on God's

marvelous grace and how He had spared him along with many other Jews from Iran's attempt to destroy all of them.

Sunday afternoon, they had arrived at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, where they had been met by the Diesenhauch Unitour representative, who took them to their hotel to check-in for the evening.

Monday morning, they went down to the hotel restaurant for breakfast and then headed over to Independence Hall, where the establishment of the Nation of Israel had been announced in 1948. They also visited several other Israeli landmarks during the following week, including Rabin's Square, the Golan Heights, Old Jaffa, Caesarea, and the Baniyas Springs. Late Friday, they arrived at the Mount Zion Hotel to check into their room for the next few days. That was when they learned about the failed attack by Iran and how close they had come to being killed without even knowing what was going on.

The Sabbath was starting, and the next day was supposed to be a leisure day so they could relax after a week of touring the countryside. The Mount Zion Hotel, they had been glad to learn, was within walking distance of the Old City of Jerusalem and several other historical landmarks. They both thought this hotel was so much better than the economy one they had originally booked previously. They decided that they really needed to thank the children for all the changes they had made for them.

"We're actually here," sighed Rebecca. "I can't believe it. We are finally here in Jerusalem at last. We've waited a long time, but we finally made it."

"Yes, we are," Isaac said. "We are finally here, and it's been a wonderful trip so far, but I really can't believe it was all nearly spoiled for us because of that evil attack from Iran. Can you believe everything that has happened? I mean, it all occurred only a few hours ago, and we never even knew anything about what was happening."

"We had better call the kids and let them know we're okay so they won't be worried," insisted Rebecca.

Rebecca placed a long-distance call to her eldest son back in New York City. After a few minutes of talking to their children and reassuring them that they were fine, she let them know how the trip had been going for them, and then she hung up the phone.

"They're relieved that we're okay. They also said that they were very surprised when they discovered that the only thing over here that was damaged was the Dome of the Rock. He also said that the president was going to be addressing Congress to state what the American response was going to be."

"Well," observed Isaac. "That was an amazing thing. To have all three of those nuclear missiles go off course like that and then end up hitting the

Dome of the Rock and nothing else. I think tomorrow morning, we had better go and spend time at the closest synagogue for early Sabbath worship and just thank Yahweh that His hand of protection and mercy was on us and everyone else around the nation of Israel. After the worship service, maybe we can head over to the Temple Mount and the Wailing Wall and see what happened.”

“You want to head over there tomorrow? The tour guide said we should have a day of rest tomorrow. After all, it’s been a long week, and he said we should take the Sabbath off to recuperate before we start the second half of the tour. Besides, aren’t we supposed to see old Jerusalem on Sunday with the rest of the tour group? Don’t you want to rest and wait until then?”

“What? Are you saying that you’re not even a little bit curious to go and see what happened? We can still go and see the rest of Old Jerusalem with the tour group on Sunday. I just want to go ahead and see the Temple Mount.”

“Besides, you know very well that ever since we arrived here, this is the part of the tour I have really been looking forward to. I have wanted to visit the Wailing Wall to place my prayers into one of the cracks along with everyone else’s. It’s something I’ve always wanted to do, ever since we first talked about maybe someday being able to take a trip to Israel. Now, look at us, here we are just as we have always dreamed about, and I can’t wait anymore.”

“I know, but right now, let’s just go to bed and get some sleep. It’s been a long day. We can talk about what we want to do tomorrow over breakfast in the morning.”

The next morning as they ate their breakfast, Rebecca and Isaac heard people talking about something strange that happened during the night.

“Did you happen to hear what those people were saying at the other table?” asked Rebecca.

“It sounded like they said people had disappeared during the night,” answered Isaac.

“I wonder what they could have meant by that. People don’t just up and disappear into thin air.”

“I don’t know. Let’s try and find out more.” They turned around and asked the couple sitting at the next table what was happening and found out that there had been thousands of reported disappearances that had taken place during the night, all over the world. Yet amazingly, just like with the missiles yesterday, Israel remained virtually unaffected by the mysterious disappearances. It seemed that once again, Yahweh had his hand of protection on the country, Isaac thought.

They also learned that there had been a nuclear explosion in Washington, DC, sometime between 2 and 2:30 Jerusalem time earlier that morning. There were also reports of conventional bombs going off and an attack on the power grid. Still, no one seemed to know exactly how severe the damage was and how many people were affected. Everything was still so confusing and chaotic.

Isaac and Rebecca hurried back up to their room to give their children a call and see if they were okay. They also wanted to find out more details about what was actually going on back home.

“They said that they don’t have all the news yet,” said Isaac. “But apparently, it seems that Iran has also attacked Washington, DC, and several different state capitals around the country and even knocked out a large portion of the nation’s electrical grid. Not only that, but there also have been a large number of airplane crashes and major highway collisions all over the country, and they’re still waiting to learn more about it. He said the authorities believe thousands of people have died because of all the attacks.”

“I think,” insisted Rebecca, “that we had better hurry up and get ready and head on over to morning worship at the local synagogue. I have a very strong feeling that we need to be in the house of God this morning.”

“I think you’re right.”

They hurriedly got ready and went down to the lobby to get directions. They then headed over to the closest synagogue to pray. After spending the morning in worship and prayer to God, thanking him for protecting them and their loved ones back home, the couple headed over to Old Jerusalem to visit the Temple Mount.

“I think the desk clerk said we needed to go this way to find the Temple Mount,” said Isaac.

“That seems to be the direction everybody else is going,” observed Rebecca.

“Did you catch anything the people in the next pew were saying about the government at worship this morning?”

“No, what did they say?”

“They felt that since the Dome of the Rock is gone, maybe the government is planning to order the rebuilding of the temple. After all, the Dome of the Rock was the only thing preventing its construction. Since it’s been destroyed, they think there’s nothing to hinder the building of a new temple. They said that, since Iran has claimed responsibility for launching the nuclear missiles, Israel can’t be blamed for the destruction and that the Nation of Islam won’t be able to stop them from clearing the site and

starting the reconstruction. They think the rest of the Muslim world is going to be too busy dealing with Iran for the time being to even bother confronting Israel.”

Isaac asked a nearby shopkeeper if they were headed in the right direction. He answered, “Yes, you just need to keep on following the crowd of people ahead of you, and then you will soon reach the Wailing Wall.”

“Thank you,” said Isaac as he and Rebecca headed off down the street after the crowds.

They approached the Wailing Wall, videotaping all the different sites. As Rebecca scanned the area, her attention kept going back to the two strangely dressed men. Their faces were covered in what appeared to be some black powder. That wasn’t the only thing that made them stand out. They were wearing long dresses that seemed to be made out of burlap. Rebecca could have sworn that they weren’t there a few seconds ago. It was as if they had appeared out of nowhere. They were looking at everyone and talking incessantly as if relaying a life-or-death message.

She turned back to look at Isaac and said, “Hey, where did those two strange-looking men come from? I didn’t see them over there just a moment ago.”

“Is that burlap they’re wearing?” asked Isaac. “They really do look strange.”

“I don’t know,” replied a man standing nearby. “They just seemed to appear from out of nowhere. Maybe they’re here to put on some kind of show.”

“What is that stuff that they have smeared on their foreheads and faces?” asked Rebecca.

“It looks like soot or something,” said the man again.

“Hey, mister,” said Isaac to another nearby man. “Do you have any idea about what’s going on here? Is there supposed to be some kind of show going on? I haven’t heard anything about one.”

“I don’t think so,” he replied. “But I’m not from around here. My family and I are here from Russia taking a Heritage Tour. Oh, by the way, my name is Ivan.”

“Glad to meet you. My name is Isaac, and this is my wife, Rebecca. We’re here on vacation, too. We’re from New York City. Did you hear what they’re saying? I didn’t quite catch it.”

“That’s probably because they were speaking in Russian. I was a little surprised to hear my mother tongue all the way in Israel...”

“I didn’t think it sounded like Russian; I just didn’t catch what he said.”

“He wasn’t speaking in Russian,” another man standing nearby joined in the conversation. “He was speaking Chinese. I am here on business from Hong Kong. Still, I didn’t expect to hear anyone speaking my language.”

“No,” another man quipped. “It was French.”

“What are you all talking about?” asked another man. “I distinctly heard him speaking Italian.”

Rebecca and Isaac decided to move a little closer to the men to make out what he was saying.

“I don’t know what everybody here is talking about,” said Isaac as he turned to Rebecca. “Those men were clearly speaking English, and I think they just said something about everyone needing to repent to God for all their sins.”

As the two of them started to move closer to where the two men were talking, they kept hearing people arguing with each other about what language the strangers were speaking. They were attracting more and more attention, and people had started.

“That’s strange. Everyone in the crowd seems to think the men are talking in their native languages,” noted Rebecca. “But that’s not possible, is it, Isaac? They can’t be speaking in everybody’s native language all at the same time, can they?”

“Not to my knowledge, but let’s listen and see what we can hear.”

As they listened to the two strangers, they heard one of them say, “You need to repent of your sins and turn back to the one true God. He has sent us here to tell you that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah that was prophesied by the prophets. He came and fulfilled all of the prophecies, and now you need to call on him and ask him to be your Lord and Savior.”

“What do you think they mean,” asked Rebecca. “How in the world could Jesus of Nazareth have been the Messiah? He didn’t reestablish the kingdom, and how could he have been killed if he was God?”

As she was asking Isaac these questions, the men continued talking.

“Jesus of Nazareth was a descendent of Abraham through the tribe of Judah and out of the house of David just as the prophets foretold. He was born in Bethlehem, Ephratah, just as the prophet Micah foretold. He was taken to Egypt to avoid being killed by King Herod like the other children in Bethlehem, as had been predicted by the prophet Jeremiah. He was later brought back from out of Egypt to the Land of Israel, as predicted by the prophet Hosea.”

“He was raised in Nazareth in Galilee and called a Nazarene as it was predicted by the prophets. He was preceded in his ministry by a voice crying out in the wilderness, referring to John the Baptist, saying, ‘Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand,’ as foretold by the prophets Isaiah and Malachi. He performed many miracles, caused the lame to walk, the blind to see, healed the sick, and raised the dead, just like the prophet Isaiah predicted.

“He also preached the good news of the kingdom of God, just as Isaiah said he would. He cleansed the temple of the merchants and moneychangers, as it had been foretold by the prophet Malachi. He presented himself to the people of Judah, according to the time laid out by the prophet Daniel- 173,880 days (or seventy weeks of years) after the rebuilding of the temple- when he entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, just as the prophet Zechariah said.”

“The Psalms predicted the Jews would reject him as their Messiah and that he would be betrayed into the hands of his enemies by a friend, and it came to pass.”

“The cost of the betrayal would be for 30 pieces of silver, as predicted by the prophet Zechariah. The money was later returned to the temple and used to buy the potter’s field as predicted. He was mocked by his accusers, as predicted in the Psalms by King David.”

“He was beaten and spat upon as he stood silent before his accusers, just as the prophet Isaiah predicted it would happen. His hands and his feet were pierced, just as King David predicted in the Psalms, and then he died between thieves just as the prophet Isaiah said he would.”

“He was given gall and vinegar to drink, as predicted by King David. Before he died on the cross, he prayed for his persecutors, as Isaiah said that he would do. His side was pierced as predicted by the prophet Zechariah and not a single bone in his body was broken, as predicted in the Psalms.”

“The Roman soldiers cast lots at the foot of the cross for his clothing, just as King David had said. Isaiah predicted he would be buried in a rich man’s grave, and it came to pass just as he had said.”

“He was not forgotten in death by God, as predicted by King David in the Psalms, and He rose from the dead after three days, as Jesus himself predicted that he would. For forty days, he presented himself to his followers and then was seen by over five hundred people as he ascended back into heaven, where he sat down on the right hand of God, just as David said he would.”

Jesus of Nazareth has completed these and many other prophecies to prove that he was the Messiah, who would come to die for the sins of the

world. Now you have seen the evidence provided by the disappearances of his followers, just as the apostle Paul, a Pharisee born of the tribe of Benjamin, said would happen in the last days.

“Now we have appeared before you, just as the apostle John wrote would happen in his book of the Revelation in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are here to witness to you about Jesus the Christ and to warn you of the coming judgment of God against this world. The man of sin is coming and will soon appear, as written in the book of the Revelation, to deceive the entire world. You all need to repent of your sins and turn to God right now so that you can be sealed by Him, thus preventing His judgment of the world from falling on you.”

“This is just crazy,” cried Ivan. “These men are clearly not in their right minds, and somebody needs to call the police and have them taken away.”

“I don’t know,” said Rebecca doubtfully. “Did you hear all those predictions about the Messiah that the men said Jesus fulfilled? There were so many of them.”

“Yes,” replied Isaac, “way too many for it to be a coincidence that one man fulfilled them all.”

About that time, two policemen showed up and said, “You two are going to have to come with us. You’re disturbing the peace and causing a scene here.”

“Our time is not yet at hand,” replied the two witnesses. “We are to continue telling the people about Jesus of Nazareth and their need to repent.”

“No,” said the police. “You both need to come with us right now.” As they reached out to grab hold of the two men to escort them away, they both started spewing flames.

The flames went around them and formed a barrier between them and the police causing the policemen to quickly back away for safety.

“Since you don’t seem to want to listen to us, we have been given the power to use to convince you,” said the two witnesses.

“To show you the words we speak are true, the clear skies over the city of Old Jerusalem will have hail fall down into the streets for the next twenty-four hours.”

No sooner had the two men spoken than marble-sized hail began to fall from the clear skies overhead, forcing all the people to retreat from the open and take cover hurriedly. Rebecca and Isaac worked their way back to their hotel room at the Mount Zion Hotel and spent the rest of the day discussing what had just taken place.

Could it be true? Could Jesus of Nazareth really have been the Messiah after all? Were the people who were missing all over the world the true followers of Jesus, and had they really been taken back to heaven to receive their reward? Was the planet really about to experience the judgment of Almighty God?

Later that day, as they were resting in their room, they heard a knock at the door. Isaac went to the door, looked out the peephole, and saw two men standing in the hallway.

“Who is it?”

The first man said, “My name is Detective Steinman, and this is my partner Detective Greenberg. Are you Isaac Levinson?”

“Yes, I am. Is there a problem, detectives?”

“Levinson,” commented Detective Greenberg. “That means you’re of the tribe of Levi, right?”

“Yes, it does. As a matter of fact, my ancestors were priests in the temple. Why?”

“My father had a genealogist research our ancestry to trace down which tribe we came from. My family didn't keep track of it after leaving Germany and going to America. There was a lot of antisemitism back then, so they just said they were German. Over the years, they lost track of our heritage. The genealogist told my dad that one of the naming ways was the Levinasian way, where the name Levi is used or contained in the name, like yours.”

“I hate to break up the conversation,” interrupted Steinman. “But this is an official investigation, not a social call.”

“Sorry,” said Greenberg. “Sometimes I get carried away.”

“We’ve been checking around the hotels to see if any of the guests visited the Temple Mount today,” said Steinman. “The hotel desk clerk downstairs said you and your wife asked for directions there this morning, and we wanted to ask if you were there.”

“Yes, we were. I actually wanted to go over there right after worship at the synagogue was over. But my wife was hungry, so we went after lunch.”

“He’s always had a fascination with the Temple,” explained Rebecca. “In fact, he has all kinds of charts and drawings of it, as well as a scale model of Solomon’s Temple that he and one of our sons took several years to build. It’s one of the things that got our son interested in architecture and construction.”

“You have a big interest in the Temple, do you, Mr. Levinson?” asked

Detective Greenberg.

"As I told you, my ancestors were priests in the temple. I guess you could say that's the reason I chose the career that I did."

"What was that," asked Steinman. "That is if you don't mind my asking."

"He was a rabbi at a kosher meatpacking plant for forty-five years," explained Rebecca.

"Really?"

"Yes, he used to say that it made him feel like he was performing sacrifices to God."

"How's that?"

"I had to make sure that the animals were killed properly, according to Jewish dietary laws, and that the meat was prepared properly," explained Isaac.

"When he became the head rabbi at the plant, he came home and said that in a way, he kind of felt like he was now the High Priest to God."

"That's all very interesting, but we still need to know what you saw at the Temple Mount when the two strangers appeared."

"Well, let's see," said Isaac. "We walked over to the Temple Mount after lunch, like I already told you earlier. As we were approaching, Rebecca was videotaping the sights around us. Then we turned back to look at the Mount, and that's when we first saw the two men."

"You were videotaping everything at the time?" asked Detective Greenberg.

"Yes, I was," replied Rebecca. "Why?"

"Can we borrow the tape and have our people make a copy of it," Steinman asked.

"Sure, I'll go get it for you."

"There may be a lot of noise on it," noted Isaac. "We could hardly hear the men because of all the talking by the people around us."

"Our lab may be able to enhance the sound and get rid of some of the noise," Greenberg suggested.

"Here's the tape," said Rebecca.

"Thanks. We'll try to get it back to you as soon as possible."

"Is there anything else you can tell us about what happened?" asked

Detective Steinman.

“Well,” replied Isaac. “When the men were speaking, everyone around us seemed to think that it was in their own language—French, German, Italian, and even Chinese.”

“We’ve gotten that same story from several other people,” Greenberg said. “We’ll see about that when we check out your tape.”

“Did you see what happened when the policemen showed up?” inquired Detective Steinman.

“When they tried to take the two men away, I could’ve sworn that they breathed fire from their mouths. I know that’s impossible, but that’s how it looked to me.”

“It looked that way to me too,” Rebecca agreed.

“Did you happen to notice if they had some kind of a container that may have contained a flammable liquid?” Greenberg asked.

“Or maybe an aerosol can they might have sprayed out and then used a match to light up?” added Steinman.

“No, I didn’t notice anything like that.”

“Me neither,” said Rebecca. “It just looked like they breathed it right out of their mouths. And also, I don’t think they were carrying anything in their hands.”

“Well, thank you for your time. We’ll get your tape back to you as soon as possible.”

“Can I ask you two a question,” asked Isaac.

“Sure, go ahead.”

“What do you think about what happened?”

“It’s not something we haven’t seen before.”

“What do you mean,” asked Rebecca.

“It’s not the first time a kook has shown up at the Temple Mount wearing sackcloth and ashes and claiming to be a messenger from God.”

“So you think they’re kooks,” Isaac asked.

“I would say so.”

“I don’t think you need to worry yourself about it,” added Detective Greenberg.

The next day Isaac and Rebecca went with their tour group to the

different sites around Jerusalem. When they returned to their hotel, they found a package waiting for them at the desk with their videotape inside. They also found a note telling them that the tape didn't add much visually but that the computer lab technician was able to enhance the sound enough to tell that the men were definitely speaking Hebrew. With all the confusion, people just probably heard wrong, said the note.

"I was sure they were speaking English when I heard them," insisted Isaac.

"Well, there was a lot of noise and confusion around us."

"Yeah, I guess so." The rest of their trip was fairly uneventful, and they returned to New York City.

Chapter 10

The Return

“According to Shi’ite Muslim teaching, the 12th Imam will return at the end of time to rule for seven years.”

www.inplainsite.org

“Iranian President prepares for 12th Imam’s reappearance,”

by Erin Roach, Baptist Press

“Hidden Imam, as he is known by his followers, will only return after a period of cosmic chaos... the era of Western predominance was drawing to a close, he said, and would soon be replaced by a “bright future” ushered in by the 12th Imam’s return.”

Telegraph.CO.UK

“God hid Mohamed al-Mahdi away from the eyes of men in order to preserve his life. God has miraculously kept them alive since the day he was hidden; eventually God will reveal al-Mahdi to the world, and he will return to guide humanity.”

www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/S/SHIA/HIDDEN.HTM[HYPERLINK](http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/S/SHIA/HIDDEN.HTM)

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Ali was sitting at the table finishing his breakfast. His family was on an Islamic Heritage Tour and had already visited the Nasir-ol-Molk mosque, which was situated near the end of the Lotifala Khan-e-Zand Street. Construction of the mosque began in 1293 and finished in 1305 AH. They had also gone to see the Imam Reza shrine, built in 818 for Imam Reza, who had been martyred by Al-Mamum and buried beside the grave of Haran, as well as the Shah Cheragl, translated great light or king of lights.

It was said that the Ayatollah Dustgheib had seen a light from a great distance, which emanated from a grave. After excavating the grave, a body in armor was found wearing a ring that said: “Al-Lyzata, Lillah, Ahmad bin Musa,” brother of Reza. Today Ali and his family were going on a trip

together to the Jamakaran well. This was going to be his very first trip to the well and he was very excited.

"Are you sure," asked his mother to her husband, "that he has had a sufficient enough amount of time to recover from this trip? I know he has been getting very tired, even if he is not complaining. That was a major catastrophe in his life last year and it would take a full-grown man a lot of time to recover. I'm afraid that this trip has just been a bit too much for him to handle."

"Don't worry," replied his father. "I'm looking out for him. Besides, it has been several months since he got out of the hospital, and I think this trip has done him a lot of good. Remember, we were planning for this trip before even his accident, and he has really been looking forward to it."

"Well, make sure you watch out for him," she insisted. "There'll be a lot of people there, and I'm afraid he's going to overexert himself. You know how he likes to try and please you. He may not want to ruin the trip for you by telling you he is either tired or in pain."

"I will. It's tough enough being a kid these days, but with a paralyzed leg and a missing eye, it has been even tougher on him, so I'll make sure he's okay."

Ali and his family were Shiite Muslims. While both Sunnis, which make up the majority of the religion's adherents, and Shiites believe Allah is God and Muhammed is his messenger, superior to all others, including Jesus, the Shiites believe that only those in Muhammad's direct bloodline are his true successors. By comparison, the Sunnis believe that a pious person willing to follow the Prophet's customs and teachings is qualified to be a successor. The divide is similar to what is found in Christianity, where Roman Catholics believe in Apostolic Succession, claiming that the Popes can trace their lineage back to St. Peter. In contrast, Baptists and Protestants believe anyone can be called of God for the pastorate, providing they meet the other qualifications laid out in I Timothy.

After finishing their breakfast, they left the hotel to join the rest of the pilgrims heading to the well. They traveled to the train yard and spent the next several hours riding to the well. As they rode the train, Ali thought of all the things he had heard about the well and how it was such a holy site to visit. According to legend, the Jamkaran well was the last known location of the 12th Imam before he disappeared around the 10th century.

At the time of his disappearance, the young Mahdi had only been a few years older than Ali himself and had already been named the new leader of the Islamic people. With enemies threatening his life, the young Imam had been led to the well by the angel Gabriel, who had been sent from Allah. Once there, he climbed down the well and was hidden.

The family had come to Tehran from Baghdad, where Ali's father, Abdul al-Bazzaz, owned a few clothing stores. His family was not extremely rich, but they were relatively well-off. Abdul had started the business during the American occupation following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. When the Americans left under President Obama, the country was in turmoil as Muslim factions fought for influence in the government.

During this time, the Christian population was decimated until almost none of them were left. Fortunately, although the family was Shiite, he was able to avoid offending the Sunnis. He was well-respected for being fair in his dealings, and after all, everyone needed good clothes.

Ali's parents had planned and saved for this trip for several years. They were actually planning to go the year before, but Ali had the accident. Ali and his mother were taking lunch to his father. He was at the store near the Green Zone. Ali decided to run ahead of her to get to the store first. All of a sudden, he heard a loud noise. He remembered feeling confused and scared for a moment, and then everything went dark. The next thing he remembered was waking up at the hospital to discover that he had been in a car bomb explosion. His entire body hurt, and it took him a couple of days to adjust to his condition. In the beginning, he felt like he was in a nightmare, and he would wake up in his bed any minute. His father helped him accept the truth. He told him that he was lucky to be alive and would have to stay in the hospital for a while.

The blast had cost him the use of his right leg. It was totally paralyzed and needed a metal brace around it so that he could stand. A flying piece of metal had embedded itself into his left eye, causing it to lose sight. He had spent several months going through rehabilitation and learning to walk on his leg with the help of the brace and crutches. Now, several months later, his family was finally here.

Although he grew tired more quickly these days, he did not plan to ruin his parents' vacation by complaining. They had flown into the Imam Khomeini International Airport late Wednesday and went directly to the Tehran Hotel to check-in and rest up for the next day. They planned to spend seven days on their pilgrimage and visit several sacred Islamic sites, starting with the Jamkaran well in Qom. The following day they took the newly completed \$17 million railway that had been specially constructed to enable the 12th Imam to travel to Tehran when he returned, quickly.

Usually, the train just ferried pilgrims back and forth from Tehran to Qom; however, they were told that there was a change in their itinerary. The well was temporarily declared off-limits to all pilgrims as President Zaakir was making a special stopover. He was visiting it before leaving for the United Nations.

Since they were already in Qom, the second most sacred city after

Mashhad, they decided to see the Fatima Al Massumeh shrine. It was built for Imam Al Ibn-Musa Rida's sister.

As they finished the tour, they noticed several tour guides concerned about something. Their concern quickly spread to many of the others visiting the shrine. That was when Abdul and his family heard about the Dome of the Rock's destruction.

The Iranian government was keeping a tight control on all the media. The official story was that President Zaakir had launched the nuclear strike to prevent an unprovoked sneak attack by Israel's Zionist government. Government officials said that the Israelis could somehow shoot down the missiles with the United States' help. In retaliation, officials said, the Jews had destroyed the Dome of the Rock.

"Father, what does it all mean," Ali asked. "How could Allah permit such a thing to happen? Why would the Israelis do such a thing?"

As the crowd began to get restless and angry, Abdul realized it was best to return to their hotel room.

"I don't know Ali. Maybe we can get more information once we get to the hotel."

As they traveled back to Tehran, signs of Muslim unrest were evident all around them. Already the crowds were gathering and calling for the deaths of those living in Israel and the United States. As they exited the train and walked to the hotel, Abdul noticed something was different about these protests.

During previous protests against the West, the Iranian government did not attempt to prevent them and, in some cases, had actually encouraged them. However, this time police and even members of the military were trying to quell the crowds. This is strange, indeed, Abdul thought.

The following morning Ali woke up and quietly got out of bed. Because of the excitement of the vacation, he had been waking up early. He took pains not to wake his parents. He knew that while they were excited about this vacation as much as he was, they were also using the time to sleep in, something they rarely could do in Baghdad.

Ali exited their room and made his way down to the lobby. He was curious and wanted to know more about the protests. As he entered the lobby, he heard loud voices shouting outside louder than those he had heard yesterday. The shouting was so loud that Ali feared the rioting would spill over into the hotel lobby. He knew that such crowds were known to destroy things and people without realizing what they were doing in moments of intense passion. They would be angry, frustrated, and took it all out on the first thing or person that they saw. However, upon listening carefully, he noticed the sounds being made were not of anger but cheers of

rejoicing.

He went out into the street and heard the crowds cheering and praising Allah for destroying the Great Satan. Unsure of what this all meant, he ran upstairs and burst into their hotel room.

As he slammed the door, Ali began to shout. "Father, mother, something amazing has happened!"

His parents stirred from their bed, still groggy from being woken up in such a manner.

"What's the matter," Abdul asked.

"Father, the crowds are still there, but they are no longer angry," Ali said.

"What are you talking about? Of course, they are angry. Those treacherous Jews destroyed our holy site in Jerusalem."

"I don't know, but the crowds are shouting something about Allah destroying the Great Satan. Father, what does it all mean?"

Abdul and his mother heard the roaring throngs of the crowd outside. This piqued their interest, and the family quickly got dressed and went outside. As they made their way outside, it was evident that something had happened during the evening.

Abdul noticed a man on some makeshift platform, and the crowd was giving him their rapt attention.

"Allah has avenged us for the sinister and cowardly attack by the Jews and their willing allies in America. While Jewish pigs are still alive, Allah has brought death and destruction to America, the Great Satan. Their great cities have been destroyed in fervent heat. The country that used nuclear weapons against innocent people now has the same weapons turned on them. The seats of power in Washington DC and other great American cities are now a desolate wasteland."

At this, the crowd erupted in rancorous cries of "Allahu Akbar" and "Death to America, death to Israel."

The man, who appeared to be a cleric, continued to speak.

"Allah has decreed that death to their cities was not enough. America and the other great western powers have been struck with another judgment of Allah. He has removed all traces of the existence of millions of their people from the earth. Their great gods of technology are no more. Their planes have fallen from the sky, they no longer have electricity, and their power grid is in shambles. They are now a third world power."

The crowds continued rejoicing for most of the day and into the

evening. As more information came in, it became evident that whatever event had caused millions in America and other western countries to vanish had mostly spared the Islamic countries. Across the Middle East, things continued as before. While there were isolated rumors of people disappearing, there were no reports of planes crashing or driverless automobiles crashing on the roadways. There were no power outages or disruptions of any of the public services. It was as if nothing had happened at all.

As things settled down in Iran, the citizens became oblivious to the outside world's events. Abdul quickly reasoned that all of this happening during their vacation was a sign from Allah. He decided to honor him by continuing with the tour.

Chapter 11

The Reveal

The trip had been very tiring for Ali. Still, he did not complain even once. They were about to return to Qom for a second time to see the Jamkaran well. It was said that pilgrims who went to the well would drop prayers on paper pieces down to where the 12th Imam was rumored to be. It was even said that Iran's president had dropped a prayer into the well when he made his surprise visit.

As the train pulled into the Qom station, Ali quickly looked around to see if the well was open or not. Along with his parents, Ali headed out into the street toward the Jamkaran mosque built next to the well.

Ali kept urging his parents to hurry up so they could get to the well. His mother begged him to try and calm down and not get too excited. As he made his way from the station to the mosque, Ali began to feel tired, and his pace began to slow a little. He hobbled along the path to the mosque, trying to keep up with his father, but he was having trouble with his crutches on the stone path.

“Hurry up, Ali,” his father called to him. “We are almost there. The well is just around to the back of the mosque.”

Many pilgrims were visiting the well today. The well was a sacred Shiite shrine and was always crowded, but today it seemed like the crowd had increased tenfold. A couple of times, Ali almost lost sight of his father.

The crowds were larger than usual because of the recent events in America. There was a lot of excitement in the air today. Many people hoped this would be the day of the reappearance of the 12th Imam, who had disappeared so very long ago.

Abdul's heartbeat was erratic. His family did not know his true intentions for going to the well. He was hoping that a prayer he had written to the 12th Imam could be dropped into the well and bring relief to his suffering son. As he drew near to the well, he started his prayer to Allah when suddenly he heard a commotion. People at the front were shouting, and more and more people were trying to get near the well. They were looking inside as if they had found something.

Ali could not make head or tails of the matter. It seemed that someone had climbed down the well, and people were trying to help him out. Ali's father got to the well and tried to look down at the infidel who had dared climb down the holy shrine. How could anybody even think of desecrating one of the most sacred shrines in the world, he thought.

Ali got really excited and asked, “Father, is that him? Is that the Mahdi? Has he finally returned the way the legend said he would?”

“I don’t think that’s the Mahdi,” replied his father. “I think someone has just climbed into the well for a prank, and he needs to get out of there as quickly as possible before he gets himself into deep trouble.”

“Did you say that he is the Mahdi?” asked a stranger standing beside them. “Is he going to reveal himself now?”

“No,” answered another man. “He doesn’t think it’s the Mahdi, and I don’t think so either.”

As the unknown man continued to climb out, people speculated back and forth about who he might be.

“I’m sure he has to be the Mahdi, Father,” insisted Ali. “Look at his long black hair and his nose and his broad forehead. Don’t you think his appearance matches the description of the Mahdi from the legends you told me about?”

“Those descriptions are general and vague. They could fit almost half of the men we know.”

“I don’t know, Father. I didn’t see anyone climb down into the well, did you?”

“I was too busy offering up my prayers to Allah to notice, and he could have already been down there before we arrived.”

“I didn’t see anyone down there, and I took along a look inside right after we got here,” Ali said.

“Then you must have missed something,” replied his father. “Either way, he had to be down there or have climbed down after we arrived.”

“Well, I still think he must be the Mahdi, Father. I think I’ll just go over there and ask him right now.”

The man had just completed his climb up out of the well, and people were starting to gather around him to find out who he was and why he had been in the well. The man, who appeared to be in his mid-forties, looked at the people, smiled, and then began to walk toward them.

Ali pierced through the crowd and went up to the stranger. “Are you the Mahdi?” he asked.

“Mahdi indeed,” snorted a couple of the men, then they demanded. “What were you doing down there?”

The man raised his hands to try and calm down the angry crowd, looked at Ali, and said in a soft, soothing voice, “Yes, I am the Mahdi, and I have

finally returned to lead the nation of Islam to its rightful destiny.”

Some of the men in the crowd laughed and reached out to grab him, saying that he must be crazy and that they were going to get rid of him before somebody got hurt. Before they could get a hold of him, the man called out that he could prove who he was. Allah would perform a miracle through him right before their very eyes.

He beckoned Ali to come forward. Ali limped towards the man on his crutches. The Mahdi took him by the hand and turned him so that the crowd could see him. Ali nervously waited as the man removed his eye patch, revealing the open socket where his left eye had once been. The people in the crowd gasped when they saw the damage done to the boy.

Bending over, the man gathered up some dirt from the ground, spit on it to make some clay, and then placed it into the empty socket. He then prayed out loud to Allah, asking him to touch Ali and heal all his infirmities. The man then put his hand over Ali's eye, and a moment later, when he removed it, the shocked crowd saw that Ali once again had two eyes. Ali blinked his eyes and looked around. He started thanking the man for restoring his vision, but the man interrupted him, telling him it was Allah that healed him and he should be thanking him instead.

Ali shouted, “Praise Allah! Allahu Akbar!”

The Mahdi then asked Ali why he was still leaning on his crutches. Ali replied that he had lost the use of his leg last year and needed them and the brace to help stand.

The Mahdi said, “Show me your leg.”

Being grateful for having his vision restored, Ali reached down to pull his pant leg up. When he had first gotten the brace, he was too conscious about it, but he had learned to accept his disability as something that Allah had willed. As he looked down, something didn't quite feel right. Then he noticed the scarred leg had taken on a different appearance. As he lifted his pants higher, he gasped at what he saw. His leg looked fully restored. All of the scars had disappeared. The brace that he had never felt before was feeling tight and binding, and he released it from his leg. He moved his leg and flexed his knee for the first time since the accident. He could not believe his eyes. It all felt like a dream, and for a moment, he was afraid he would wake up to find that nothing had changed. He moved his leg again as if to check its condition. It felt like it was never paralyzed at all.

“I told you,” replied the Mahdi. “Allah has healed all of your infirmities.”

Ali threw the crutches to the ground, jumped into the air, then twisted and turned around. Seeing his father, he ran to him and jumped into his arms, shouting, “Look Father, he is the Mahdi, and Allah has healed me

through him.”

Ali's father was in a state of shock. He realized the validity of the miracle when Ali ran into his arms, and his eyes immediately watered up. He had been praying for this for so long, and now it had happened. “Yes, my son,” Abdul replied, tears streaming down his face. “You were right. He is the Mahdi, and Allah has used him to give me back a whole son once more. Praise be to Allah for his compassion and mercy.”

As Ali and his father celebrated, several people with afflictions started approaching the Mahdi and begged him to heal them. After a couple of hours of dealing with the people, the Mahdi moved into town and headed for the train station to go to Tehran, where he planned to announce his return to the entire world.

As he made his way to the town, word spread quickly about what he had done at the well. Crowds of people gathered around him, shouting praises to Allah, thanking Him for the Mahdi's return. As he took the train from Qom, word spread from the city to the rest of the world, and the world press members began heading to Iran. They all wanted to meet the Mahdi and find out exactly what was going on.

As the train moved towards its destination, the Mahdi stood like a ramrod in the center of the car. The train swayed back and forth; however, it did not seem to affect him in any way. The passengers kept their eyes fixated on him. They noticed he did not need to hold on to anything to maintain his balance. If he was aware of the stares and conversation being directed towards him, he did not give it a second thought. He looked deep in thought; his eyes were distant, and there was a slight frown on his face.

After the train reached Tehran, the Mahdi went to a local mosque. After praying to Allah, he met with the head cleric, Omar Khomeini. The meeting went on for several hours. He made arrangements to contact the top clerics of Islam throughout the world and have them come to Tehran to establish his identity. He made it very plain that he meant the leading clerics of both the Shia and Sunni factions.

After his meeting, he headed over to the Tehran Hotel and acquired a room for the evening. In the morning, he came downstairs to meet with all the assembled world press, who had descended on Tehran. It was amazing how fickle the media could be. Just a few days ago, they were referring to Iran as the scourge of the earth. Yet, now they appeared in Tehran with an almost infatuated star-struck look.

The Mahdi planned to announce his identity to the world and answer any questions they might have for him, including the obvious one, where he had been all this time. As he entered the room, flashbulbs started going off, and all the reporters started asking questions all at once. He pointed to one of the reporters, asked him to identify himself and to repeat his

question.

“Sir,” said the reporter. “My name is Michael Davis. I represent The Associated World Press. My question is about establishing your identity once and for all, so here we go. Is it true that you are claiming to be the 12th Imam? Someone who was supposed to have disappeared back around the 10th century, known as the Mahdi, or ‘the guided one’ as I believe he is also called. Would that be right, sir? Are you claiming to be the Mahdi?”

“That is correct. That is who I am. You sir, over there,” he said, pointing to another reporter. “What is your question?”

“Yes, sir,” replied the reporter. “My name is Daniel Cummings, and I am a reporter for the UK Press. If you disappeared in the 10th century, then just where exactly have you been all this time? What caused you to reappear at this particular time, and what has kept you from aging all these years? I mean, you don’t look like a man over a thousand years old. You look more like a man in his mid-to-late forties, I would say.”

“First of all,” explained the Mahdi. “I have been aging, but it was slowed down a great deal over the years. I was just a mere child when I became the 12th Imam. My father had just been killed, and his enemies were coming after me too. I began praying to Allah for protection. After praying, I received a vision from Allah. The angel Jibril, who is also known as Gabriel in the Jewish Holy Scriptures, came to me and led me to the Jamkaran well for my protection. When I reached the well, he told me that I was to climb down and when I did, he placed my body into occultation.”

“What is occultation?” Cummings asked.

“You might better understand the term as a form of suspended animation,” answered the Mahdi. “After placing me in occultation, the angel Gabriel hid my body so that nobody would ever be able to find it, at least not until Allah had determined that it was the right time for me to be revived. While I was in the state of suspended animation, my heart rate and other bodily functions slowed down to the point that my aging was greatly reduced.”

“During that same time, my spirit was taken away from my body to be with Allah. I was taught everything he felt I would need to know to live in this new period. This was so I could rule much more effectively over his people. I was taught about all the technological advances that would be developed and how to understand their primary functions. I was also taught how to communicate with people in all of the major languages spoken in the world today. This was done so that I would be able to communicate effectively with everyone throughout the entire world.”

As he was speaking, he demonstrated a fluent ability to speak English, German, Chinese, Japanese, French and Italian, Spanish, Hebrew,

Mongolian, Persian, Turkish, Russian, and Dutch. He also spoke several other languages in different dialects from around the world.

“Everything that has happened in the world over the past several days has all been occurring according to the will of Allah.”

“What do you mean by that,” asked Michael Davis. “Are you saying that the attacks carried out against Israel and the United States, as well as all the disappearances around the world, were all the will of Allah?”

“Of course it was,” answered the Mahdi. “The great Satan of the Western world has been removed as a world superpower, and all the corrupted teachings of the Jewish prophet Jesus have been removed from the world, as well as all the people who claimed to follow them.

“Have you not noticed that every major country, including your nation of Great Britain, have suffered severe calamities and disruptions? Yet here in the Muslim nations, as you can see for yourself, everything continues as it was before. There have been no mass casualties or changes in lifestyle, except for the better.

For several centuries now, there have been many people who, probably for them to achieve as much power as possible, have been changing all the teachings that the Prophet Jesus gave to us during his lifetime. These people changed Jesus, who had actually been sent to this world by Allah as one of his prophets, no higher than Moses, Abraham, or any of the other prophets, to teach his word from being a mere man and made him out to be some god—a false god. Jesus himself never claimed to be a god, but they needed a god to base their power. In fact, does not the Bible and Jewish Torah declare that there is but one God?

Allah finally sent the prophet Mohammed in the sixth century to bring the correct teachings back to the people of the world. Still, by that time, the Christian religious leaders had acquired a great deal of personal power over the people. They were not willing, in the slightest, to relinquish it.

“For many centuries now, these Christians have been promoting their false religion and ultimately corrupting a large portion of the world. Allah finally got to the point of no return with all these people. He came to the decision that he had to remove every single one of them, or at least the ones that he felt could never be redeemed, from off the face of the earth.

“All of the so-called Christians who have not been taken away and are still here in the world are all people Allah felt had not completely bought into the false teachings about Jesus. He decided there might even be a possibility of redemption for them, so for the time being, they have been spared the punishment of Johanan for all of eternity.

“If they decide to turn from the false beliefs of Christianity and truly embrace the teachings of Islam, they might still be able to receive

their eternal rewards. But if they reject Islam's teachings and continue to cling to their false religion, they can still be sent to Johanan to burn forever. All they have to do to get this second chance is accept the truth and embrace Islam in its entirety.”

“Within the next few days, I plan to meet with the top ten clerics from around the Islamic world. I have sent word to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Indonesia, and Bangladesh. Of course, I have already been meeting with the top cleric here in Iran. I plan to establish my identity with these men. They will go back to their homelands and present me as the Mahdi, the true representative of Allah for the entire Nation of Islam. Once my identity has been established, we are going to start implementing the will of Allah. We will bring the entire world under his authority once and for all.”

All the reporters started asking questions about his intentions, but the Mahdi just turned around and walked away from the microphones, and returned to his room in the hotel.

Chapter 12
Establishing Identity

And I stood upon the sand of the sea and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns and upon his horns ten crowns...

...and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

And they worshiped the dragon, which gave power unto the beast: and they worshiped the beast, saying... who is able to make war with him?

And there was given on to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue for forty and two months.

...and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations *Rev.13:1-7*

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do... *Rev. 13:14*

"Well," asked Omar's assistant, Mohsen Rohani. "Are you really convinced that he is the Mahdi?"

"Not on your life," replied Omar. "He has given a few good answers, but it's going to take a lot more to convince me." Omar Khamenei was well-respected for his knowledge of Islamic doctrine. His position as head Shiite cleric also afforded him a high level of religious and political power. He was known for having a zeal for his faith. He thought that it was second to none. However, he also jealously guarded his power with the fervor of a pit bull. Since he was a little boy, his parents and teachers at the seminary had told him that he had a long way to go. They were preparing him for this day. He knew that now. At the time, he had thought them brutal and barbaric, making him sit and memorize all the religious books when he could have been playing with his friends outside.

But now he knew why they had done it. He had realized soon after that he had a destiny that few people get. That was when he had truly aligned himself with his parents and teachers' goals. He had quickly become the top student at the seminary and had passed with flying colors. People at the seminary as well as other madrassahs were calling him the great one. No one had the knowledge and the wisdom that he had shown in those years.

He was still at the top of the food chain, and had no intention of relinquishing his position.

"Okay. But if you don't believe him, why are you calling all the different clerics?"

"He wants to make a fool of himself in front of the world, and I intend to give him more than enough rope to hang himself." Omar could be very cold when he wanted to. He was around 5 ft. 8 inches tall with a lean body. His eyes were jet black, as black as his shoulder length hair and they bore into the person's soul when he looked at them. People were afraid to meet his gaze. His piercing gaze had brought many of his opponents down. Couple that with his sarcastic verbal abuse and the fact that he could back every word with religious facts had made him a force to be reckoned with.

"So, who are you planning to bring together?"

"Oh, I have several people in mind," replied Omar. "He wants the ten top clerics, and he feels I am one of them, so the rest come from the other nine top Islamic countries that he has named."

"Really! Anyone specific you have in mind?"

"I have a few people I want to call."

"Come on! I need to know more than that."

Omar could feel the muscles of his mind churning. He was a lot of things, but dumb was not one of them. In fact, he was one of the most astute people in the country. Leaders of Iran sought his council and welcomed his suggestions. He knew exactly who he was going to call and why.

"Well, I am thinking of calling Saib Malik from Saudi Arabia."

"Saib Malik?" replied Mohsen. "But I thought you and he never agreed on anything. Besides, he is Sunni."

"That's true, but he has spent a lot of time looking at the prophecies of the 12th Imam, and it would be very hard for fraud to get past him. He told me to bring the best clerics in the world, remember? I have no intention of doing anything less. The people I bring in will know everything there is to know about the Hadiths regarding the 12th Imam. And when I bring both the Sunni and Shiites together, no one will be able to question their judgment when they all come together to prove that he is, in fact, a fraud."

"Okay, who else are you planning to call?"

"Well," remarked Omar, thoughtfully. "He mentioned Syria, so that could only mean Jihad Mazid. He would be the top cleric there."

"Your good friend? Well, he does know a great deal about the Hadiths."

"Yes, he is very well respected in Syria and other countries. His opinion will pull a lot of weight in this decision."

"Anyone else in mind for the inquisition?"

"Funny you should put it that way," Omar chuckled. "I was thinking of Rajah Qaadis from Egypt. He has been a judge and a very deeply inquisitive one at that. When it comes to getting to the truth of the matter, especially when there seems to be no clear-cut evidence, he keeps on digging until the truth comes out. And he's highly respected throughout all of the Islamic world."

"Oh yes," his assistant replied. "I think you have made a very excellent choice there."

"I am so glad I have your approval," Omar replied sarcastically. "Now give me the phone number for Ali Nassir in Jordan. He has a keen mind and can spot fraud in a minute. It only takes a few questions, and he can tell if someone is lying to him. While you are at it, give me the number for Amir Niemi in Lebanon."

"Amir?" said his assistant, hesitantly. "Do you really think he will be able to make it here on such short notice? I hear his arthritis is so bad he takes a lot of time to get anywhere, and the meeting is set for the day after tomorrow."

"Yes," replied Omar, "but for something like this, he will do anything to be here, no matter how much pain he is in; besides, there is almost nobody around who would ever question his judgment on any important matter."

"And what could be more important than this?" asked his assistant.

"Exactly, so don't forget to call the one man who always questions his judgment."

"You mean, Hassan Asmi from Iraq?"

"Yes," answered Omar. "They rarely agree on anything, and Hassan just loves to question Amir's judgment on everything."

"You're going to make this as difficult for him as possible, aren't you?"

"He said that he could prove that he is the Mahdi," replied Omar, "and he wanted the top clerics. Clerics who everyone respects and would listen to. If he can get everyone I am calling to agree, then he really would have to be the Mahdi."

"So who are you going to try and get from Pakistan?"

"I think the best choice has to be Saleem Baseer."

"Do you really think you can get him here?"

"I talked to him an hour ago, and he said he could hardly wait to put the stranger to the test. He is on his way right now."

"Are you calling anyone from Turkey?" asked his assistant.

"I think the best man for this job from Turkey would have to be Habib Latif."

"What about Indonesia?"

"I think there's only one man for the job from there, and that would be Abdul Wahid."

"Is he still alive? I thought he died last year."

"No, I just talked to him the other day. He would be just the fellow for this. He is the top voice in Indonesia and no one who would ever question his final decision on a matter. This is just the type of situation where he could be a lot of help to us."

"You've really picked out quite a group of men," said his assistant. "These are probably the finest men in all of Islam, but several of these men would be hard put to be in the same room for any length of time."

"I know," agreed Omar. "This is going to be the perfect test for this so-called Mahdi."

Two days later, in the Tehran mosque's main office, the ten clerics gathered to confront the man who claimed to be the 12th Imam. Jihad and Omar were standing off to one side of the room, discussing all of the different clerics and why Omar chose these particular people.

"I can't believe," said Jihad, "that you would actually bring Hassan here at the same time I am here. You know that he has tried to have me killed at least twice."

"It's okay," replied Omar reassuringly. "Hassan has given me his word that he will put his personal feelings aside until we have reached a final decision on this matter."

"And you think he is going to keep his word to you."

"Hassan wants to resolve this matter as much as anyone here, and he does possess the ability to question people."

"I still can't believe that you were able to get this group of people into one room. Most of them can't stand each other and swore they would never be in the same room together."

"Yes, but this is a very unique situation, and everyone here is the most

knowledgeable and respected person in their homelands. That is the most important thing right now."

"Well," observed Jihad, "no one will ever accuse you of trying to stack the decision in a particular direction. These guys hardly ever agree on anything."

Amir walked over to where Jihad and Omar were talking. "Are you sure, Omar? Is this really the best group of people that you could think of for this job?"

"If you can think of anyone else who is more knowledgeable of the prophecies about the Mahdi and his return, or the Koran, tell me, and I will bring them here," replied Omar.

"As far as knowledge is concerned, these are the right people. But I'm more worried about their feelings for each other. This could quickly turn into a very volatile situation if you're not careful."

"Everyone here, including yourself, agreed that right now, the most important thing is to determine whether or not this is the Mahdi. Until we reach the final decision on the subject, nothing else matters as much as this.

"Do you think he could be the Mahdi?"

"I called everyone because he came here to Tehran from the Jamkaran well, just as the prophecies said he would. He came to me as the first cleric of importance that he could reach and asked me to put this group together."

"But do you think he is the Mahdi?"

"No," stated Omar, emphatically. "I just don't buy it. It's just too pat, and his timing is just too coincidental to suit me. We spent years planning this attack. We even leaked a false trail for the American security forces to find at opportune times. They thought that they were successfully thwarting all our efforts to attack them again. We called off or prevented many other attacks to keep them in their happy little bubble. They thought that they were safe. After all of that, after losing all those men; after all the hard work, now that we're so close to the end, here comes a man who calls himself Mahdi and says that everything was because of Allah's will and he was a part of it? "

"Well, it was the will of Allah, wasn't it?" asked Amir.

"Of course it was, but he had nothing to do with it."

"If you don't think he is the Mahdi," said Saeed, walking over to the men, "Then why did you insist on all of us coming together like this?"

"Because," responded Omar, " it has to be proven beyond a shadow of a doubt. Have you seen the news channels recently? Thousands of people already believe that he is the Mahdi. They claim that he started performing miracles as soon as he got out of the well. We need to decide quickly and put an end to it once and for all."

"We have to think both ways, Omar," insisted Jihad. "What if he is telling the truth? What if he really is the Mahdi? What if everything we have planned and accomplished has been heading up to his return, all by the will of Allah?"

Ali, taking a couple of puffs on his asthma inhaler, said, "We can't be too quick to dismiss him. After all the prophecies do say that this is exactly the way the Mahdi is supposed to return to us in the last days."

"That's right," replied Omar. "That's what the prophecies say. Anyone who has studied the prophecies can find enough information to know what they would need to do to pull off this kind of hoax. We will have to examine him very carefully. He has given us no real information other than things that have been foretold to us in the prophecies, and just about anybody with the right training could do that."

Amir moved toward one of the chairs around the conference table. "My arthritis is starting to act up again, and I need to sit down. This is the reason we are here, isn't it, to question him for answers that only the true Mahdi is supposed to be able to answer?"

"Yes," replied Omar. "We are only here to get at the truth. We must prove, beyond any reasonable doubt, whether this man is the Mahdi as he claims to be or not. We have to either verify his claims or denounce him once and for all."

At that precise moment, the door to the conference room opened, and the man claiming to be the Mahdi briskly walked in.

"What is it that you need to know from me so that I may convince you of my identity, my true intentions, and my mission for Allah?"

Several hours later, the discussion was still going on.

"I still just cannot believe it," said Omar, flatly. "It's all just too convenient. It's just all too pat. Everything he has been saying to us for the past few hours could be true, or he could have fabricated the entire thing. He has accurately told us of his earlier life. But we just don't have any way of either proving or disproving any of it. All someone needs to do is go through the holy texts and get all the knowledge about his earlier life. The timing of his arrival is just a little too perfect for me. I mean, showing up at just the right moment to step in and be the one in charge."

"But Omar," insisted Habib. "If this man truly were the Mahdi, then everything has truly been happening for a reason. Maybe the timing is too perfect because Allah willed it to be. Maybe he is in control of everything, and we just cannot accept it."

"That indeed may be so, but I still am going to need more proof to convince me. I don't know about all of you, but I still have my doubts. I am just not ready to turn the control of the entire world over to someone I don't know and can't trust. If a man is going to control the world and everyone and everything in it because of my decision, I need to be sure that I can trust him."

"What about the miracle at the Jamkaran well?" asked Raja. "Doesn't that give you any kind of proof? Doesn't that show that Allah is working through him?"

"*Miracle,*" snapped Omar. "What miracle? I didn't see any miracle being performed by this man, did you? Oh, I know everyone is saying that a marvelous miracle was performed on that boy at the well, but can we prove that it actually happened as everyone said it did? Go out and look for yourselves. Talk to the people. You will hear ten different renditions of the story. Do any of you know anything, anything at all, about the little boy that was supposedly healed? How do we know for sure that the whole thing wasn't just staged to convince everyone that he really was the Mahdi?"

"Again, everything that has happened has just been too convenient for me. I mean, a disabled and half-blind little boy just happens to be there at the well so he can be healed in front of everyone? Did anyone see his leg before the Mahdi healed it, or was his pants leg covering it? Did anyone just happen to get a good look at his missing eye, or was there a patch covering it before it was supposedly healed? Again I tell you, I need more proof than just a bunch of theatrics."

"So you need more proof?" replied the Mahdi. "Are you telling me that you need another miracle performed, in front of your very eyes, so that you can witness it for yourself? You say that you don't want an imposter to be able to rule the world, and I think that you have given some very valid reasons for your personal disbelief in me."

"Since you're not worried about losing your personal position and only care that the right person is in charge, Allah has informed me to tell you that I am going to give you this proof that you so desperately need. Allah is going to allow me to perform several miracles, not just one or two. They will be more than enough to convince you."

"What are you going to do," quipped Omar defiantly, "perform some more magic tricks to display your supernatural powers?"

"Oh," stated the Mahdi, "it will be more than just simple tricks. I will

do things that no ordinary living man on this planet can do. I am going to show you things that only Allah himself could accomplish. Habib, how long have you had those scars there on your face?"

"I have had these scars for many years," replied Habib. "Some of them since I was a very young jihadist fighting for Allah and my country."

At that, the Mahdi walked over to where Habib was standing and began to run his hands all over the scars on his face. As he did so, they started to slowly fade away until they disappeared from his face, leaving clean, fresh, smooth new skin in their place. It looked like nothing had ever touched his face before. There was not a hint of a mark. Next, he turned and walked over to where Amir was sitting at the conference table and said, "Here, my friend, let me help you with the pain you are experiencing." He placed his hands on Amir's shoulder and arm.

Suddenly, Amir rose to his feet, almost leaping up, and exclaimed, "My arthritis! It's not hurting anymore!" Excitedly he walked back and forth and jumped up in the air a few times. He looked at Omar in amazement and said, "For the very first time in many years, I am completely free of pain. Completely free, I tell you."

Across the room, Ali raised his inhaler to his lips to take a puff, as he was having trouble taking in a breath of air because of all the excitement he was starting to feel.

"Ali," called the Mahdi, "why don't you just put that thing away. You don't need it anymore." With that, he quickly crossed the room and touched Ali's chest, who instantly took a deep, satisfying breath for the first time in years.

"I can breathe!" exclaimed Ali, excitedly taking in several deep breaths. "And I didn't even have to use my inhaler. Allah be praised!"

"Omar," whispered Jihad to his friend. "What about your son? Maybe he can perform a miracle and heal your son for you."

It was as if the Mahdi had electrified Omar's body. He could feel the charge all up and down his spine. If there was one thing that could bring Omar down, if he had one weak spot, it was his son. He had been in an accident and was in a vegetative state now. The doctors had almost given up. Although he did not believe in the Mahdi, there was a sudden flicker of hope. Could this really be true? Can I have my son back again? 'O Allah! If this is so, I will humbly ask for forgiveness and spend the rest of my life in servitude!' he silently prayed.

"My son?" muttered Omar softly. "My son is dead. There's nothing that anybody can do for him now."

"Omar, your son is not dead. He is only in a coma, and the doctors say

there is always a chance that he will come out of it someday."

"Jihad, you know that my son has been in that condition for well over six months now, without any signs of improvement. The doctors have given us very little hope of any recovery, and after this much time, they don't even know what condition he would be in if he did wake up. I just haven't had the heart or the willingness to let go of him completely and have him taken off the life-support system."

The Mahdi turned and walked back over to Omar and said, "Tell me about your son, what happened to him."

"He was in a terrible car accident," replied Jihad. "He nearly died but has been kept on a life support system ever since. The accident occurred over six months ago, and he hasn't shown any sign of improvement in all of that time."

The Mahdi put his hand on Omar's shoulder. "Call the hospital, Omar. Allah has told me that he has healed your son to give you the proof you need."

"I...I...I can't," he replied reluctantly. "I'm afraid of another disappointment."

"Go ahead, Omar, it will be okay," said Amir, trying to reassure him. "You've seen for yourself what he just did for all of us here. What have you got to lose?"

"I'm afraid," whispered Omar softly. "I have doubted Allah, and now I'm afraid he is going to punish me by not healing my son."

"Go ahead, Omar," insisted the Mahdi. "It will be okay. When you make the call, he will be the one to answer it."

Omar put his shaking hand in his pocket and took out his phone. There was a glimmer of hope as well as a sense of disbelief as he dialed the hospital and waited as the phone began to ring on the other end of the line. A look of happiness and surprise crossed Omar's face as he heard his son's voice answering the call.

"My son is alive," he whispered quietly. "Allah be praised! The Mahdi really has finally returned to us. May the will of Allah be done throughout the entire world!"

"Now that we have established my identity to your satisfaction," said the Mahdi with a smile, "I think that all of you should return to your homelands and start spreading the word about my return. Start making arrangements to meet with your government representatives. We need to start establishing the new Nation of Islam so we can start calling the rest of the world to Allah. I want you to try to arrange these meetings over the next

few days so that we can establish this new nation as quickly as possible. The faster we can do this, the faster we can start moving all our own people around the world and get them placed into positions of power before the rest of the world can recover from what has happened the last few days."

"How are we going to control the world," asked Omar. "Even with all the chaos that has been happening, the world is still a big place, and there are lots of countries to control."

"I'm planning to divide the world into ten different regions," explained the Mahdi. "And since the ten of you are the ones helping me set up this nation, I will be placing each of you in control of those ten regions. I will establish my seat of government here in Tehran, and I will leave it up to each of you to decide the location you want for the seat of your branch of government. You will divide each of your regions into smaller districts and place people you can trust to control those districts. In time, they will establish even smaller districts and put people under them in control, all the way down to the local level. The next thing we'll probably have to do is establish a new monetary system so that everyone in the world uses the same currency. Over the next few weeks, I plan to meet with the governments of both Russia and China. I want to establish peace treaties with them. They have both been so helpful in their past dealings with Iran, and I think they just might continue to be of some use to us in the future."

Chapter 13

Peace

...and he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease... Dan. 9:27

In Prime Minister David Rothberg's office, the police commissioner told him about the two strangers who had appeared a few days earlier.

"The hailstorm ended just when they said it would, but nobody seems to be able to explain the wall of fire that caused the officers to back away from them so quickly," he noted.

"I've been doing a little research of my own," said the Prime Minister. "I was thinking of something I saw in a circus act when I was a little boy."

"What do you mean?"

"Have you ever heard of a human flamethrower?"

"No," the commissioner replied. "What is it?"

"It's someone who seems to spit fire out of his mouth. It's a trick, really. They hold a flammable liquid in their mouth, light a match or a lighter, then hold the flame in front of their faces. When they spit the liquid out, it catches fire, and a flame moves out in front of them like they're breathing fire. Maybe that's what happened. Instead of that wall of fire, it was just a quick flash in front of the officers' faces that caused them to back off in a hurry, and they were just a little confused."

"But what about the hailstorm?" asked the commissioner. "You have to admit, that was a bit strange."

"Maybe they got hold of a meteorological report and just decided to take advantage of the situation," said the Prime Minister. "Did the two men cause any problems before the incident with the officers?"

"No, they were just standing there shouting something about Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah and that we should all repent."

"Sounds like a couple of kooks to me. Assign a couple of officers to keep an eye on them for a while, just to watch, mind you. Don't approach or harass them if they aren't doing anything to harm themselves or anyone else."

"Okay. By the way, did you see the incident report of what they were saying?"

"I glanced at it briefly. Why?"

"It just seemed a little strange to me, that's all."

"What seemed strange?"

"All the people who gave statements were visiting here from different countries," responded the commissioner.

"Yes," said the Prime Minister. "But that's nothing strange. It happens all the time."

"It does, except everyone seemed to think that the two men were talking in their language. You know, Russian, German, English, and Dutch, to name a few. Whatever their native language was, that's what they each thought they heard them speaking in."

"Hmmm, well again, there was a lot of confusion there at the end, and maybe they just remember it wrong."

"Omar," said the Mahdi. "Now that you've talked to your people and they are convinced I am who I say I am, I need you to help me on another matter. You have to stop the attacks in Israel."

"But," insisted Omar. "They are infidels, and they don't follow Allah or the Holy Koran."

"Allah doesn't want them destroyed," explained the Mahdi patiently. "At least not at the moment. He wants to allow them to return to him as his people. Call it a final warning. You must have realized by now that only Allah could have saved them from your attack. That only he could have redirected the missiles in midair and then kept them from detonating on impact."

"I figured there had just been a malfunction somewhere, but so far, nobody has been able to come up with a reasonable explanation."

"Well," said the Mahdi emphatically. "I'm giving you the explanation."

"But why did Allah redirect the missiles to the Dome of the Rock? That is one of his most sacred worship sites. I don't understand."

"Allah has determined that he wants the nation of Israel to rebuild Solomon's Temple and to start sacrificing to him again, and the Dome of the Rock was in the way. Allah just took advantage of the attack and made it possible for the site to be cleared without the entire Islamic world wanting revenge against the Jews for its destruction. They didn't attack it

themselves and can't be blamed for it, but I can allow them to clear the area of debris and start reconstructing the Temple. I need you to get a hold of Hamas and the other organizations bent on Israel's destruction and let them know what I have told you."

"Me? How am I supposed to do any of that? I'm not in touch with any of those organizations."

"Don't play coy with me. Why do you think I chose you as my second in command? It was because I know you have connections just about everywhere and strong enough ties that people will listen to you without questioning your reasoning. They all trust your judgment, and if I can convince you, I know that you are more than capable of doing what I'm asking of you. Allah has been watching you for a long time and directing your path. Why do you think he sent me to you in the first place? I could have gone to any other Muslim cleric, and they would have welcomed me with open arms."

"Yes, Mahdi," replied Omar obediently. "I will see what I can do."

"Good. I knew I had chosen well, and I am sure that I can depend on you."

The Mahdi reached over and picked up the phone.

"I need you to get the Israeli Prime Minister on the line and see if you can set me up an appointment with him for tomorrow afternoon in his office. I want to speak with him about the attack and assure him that there will be no further incidents. After you've made the appointment, secure an airplane for me and make the necessary travel arrangements."

"Yes, Mahdi," came the answer from the person on the other end of the call. "It will be done as you have said."

"Now that that is taken care of," the Mahdi mused to himself, "I think I need to prepare for my trip."

The phone rang in the Prime Minister's office. After a brief conversation, he hung up.

"What was that about?" asked the Police Commissioner.

"That's the other thing I wanted to talk to you about," replied the Prime Minister. "Have you heard the news out of Iran about the stranger that appeared on Sunday?"

"I've heard something about it, but I've been so busy following up reports on the disappearances and the two men that I haven't paid much attention to it. He's supposed to be a new leader or something in their

religion, isn't he?"

"Supposedly," explained the Prime Minister. "He is the one they think is going to unite all of Islam. They have been prophesying about him for a long time. They call him the 'Mahdi.' I have read about that a little. He is supposed to work miracles and other stuff. That was his representative on the phone just now, calling to see if I would be willing to meet with him. He says he has something important to discuss with me, so I need you to make arrangements to meet him at the airport and bring him back here. He wants us to try to get together tomorrow afternoon."

"That's rushing things a bit, isn't it?"

"It seems he's been able to convince a lot of people to back him in his claim in a rather short time. He feels we must meet."

"What do you think?"

"I think it's too intriguing to pass up. Something is going on, and it ties in with what's happening around the world. We have to get to the bottom of this. Make all of the necessary security arrangements. Let's meet this guy and see what he wants."

"Yes, sir," said the commissioner, as he turned around and left the office.

The next afternoon the Mahdi's plane landed at the Jerusalem airport, where he was met by the Prime Minister and a police escort. At his request, the Mahdi was first taken to the Temple Mount to view the destruction of the Dome of the Rock for himself, and then he was taken to the office of the Prime Minister.

"I am so glad," began the Mahdi, "that no one in Jerusalem was seriously hurt by this unfortunate incident."

"Unfortunate incident?" replied the Prime Minister, almost in disbelief. "What do you mean unfortunate incident? This was a planned, deliberate, and malicious attack. It was meant to wipe us out completely."

"Of course, you are right. My apologies; a poor choice of words on my part," the Mahdi corrected himself.

"But it is an incident that I can promise you will never happen again. I have put my best people on the job, and all attacks against the nation of Israel will stop permanently. I am here to give you my word on the matter and to sign a peace treaty between the nation of Israel and the new Islamic world order I am currently in the process of establishing."

"And just how can I be sure that you will be able to make everyone in the Islamic world adhere to this Treaty," asked the Prime Minister. "In fact, how do I know you are who you say you are? I have no idea about the

power that you wield over those hoodlums. Just exactly who are you, and how did you come to wield so much power in such a short period?”

“Again, my apologies. It seems that time is short, but that doesn’t mean that we can dispense some formalities. Allow me to introduce myself officially. You may refer to me as the Mahdi. I am the new representative of Allah to my people. I was born over 1,000 years ago; however, I did not die, but rather Allah hid me for such a time as this.”

“My coming has been prophesied for centuries throughout all of Islam, and now Allah has finally made it happen. I have spent the last few days convincing the top Islamic clerics of my identity. They do not doubt that I am who I say I am. Once my identity was established beyond the hint of a doubt, they reported back to their home countries and brought both Shiite and Sunni factions completely under my control.”

“That is truly amazing. Such a thing has never happened before. If it has, then I’m not aware of it. But, tell me something. What about the civil governments of those countries?”

“As go the religious orders,” explained the Mahdi flatly. “So eventually will go the civil government. After all, the clerics have always represented Allah’s will in the established government, and now Allah has placed me in charge of the clerics.”

“Well, I’m glad you think that way. But how will it stop them from taking matters into their own hands? How can you be certain that they won’t disobey your orders?”

“Any attacks that occur against the nation of Israel will be dealt with swiftly and severely by me. I have been sent by none other than Allah, and they all know better than to disobey me. After all, I feel that we both serve the same one true God, the God of our mutual ancestor Abraham. As a token of goodwill, I am authorizing you to do the cleanup of the Temple Mount. I also assure you that the Islamic world will not try and rebuild there, nor hinder you in any way. Allah has told me that he would prefer that the nation of Israel be allowed to rebuild Solomon’s Temple. That will be part of the provisions agreed to in this new treaty.”

Prime Minister Rothberg listened in stunned silence, taken aback by what he had heard. Could it be true? Would this man be able to accomplish what Israel had desired for centuries and achieve peace? Did he dare hope?

“Very well,” Rothberg said. “I will relay your offer to the Knesset, and I will get back to you on the matter. If you can deliver what you say you can, I’m sure that they will be glad to work with you on this treaty.”

A few days later, after meeting with the governments of several Islamic

states, the Mahdi was again standing with Prime Minister Rothberg in front of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, to formally sign the new peace treaty between Israel and the new Islamic World Order.

The Mahdi began reading the agreed-upon terms of the treaty for the record.

“Number one on the list of the treaty items is that the nation of Israel has the right to exist, and all acts of terrorism against them will stop immediately. Anyone committing an act of terror against the Israeli people will be severely punished.”

“Second, the Palestinian people, upon my suggestion, have finally agreed to accept the two-state arrangement. The one initially proposed by the United Nations charter of 1948 established Israel's nation and offered them their own state.

“Item three of the treaty, Lebanon will patrol the northern Israeli border and make sure that no more attacks come from their territory.”

“Item four, all lands acquired by Israel after they were attacked and defended themselves, will be retained by Israel in addition to the 1948 boundaries. They will not have to dismantle any of their settlements in the so-called occupied territories.”

“Item five, Iran will make reparations for their sneak attack that caused Israel to burn fuel and put planes into the air for their defense. They will also pay for the Temple Mount's cleanup so that Israel can begin construction on the new Temple.”

“Item six of the treaty, Jerusalem will be under the sole control of Israel, but Islamic pilgrims will have the right to visit holy sites, so long as their pilgrimage is a peaceful one.”

“Item seven, OPEC is going to supply oil to Israel at a greatly discounted rate for the next three and a half years so they will be able to direct more funding towards the rebuilding of the Temple in order to finish it as quickly as possible. Any materials needed for the Temple that can be supplied out of the Islamic territories shall also be provided to Israel at discounted rates. These and the other previously agreed upon treaty terms are hereby presented to you and now await the Prime Minister's and my signature. Here is my signature.”

“And here,” Rothberg said enthusiastically, “is mine. I hope that both of our nations can now look forward to a long and unbroken arrangement.”

“Agreed,” replied the Mahdi.

With the signing of the treaty, the entire Knesset stood to their feet with thunderous applause. Everyone in the room was sure that a new day of

Islamic-Israeli relations had finally arrived.

Finally, there would be peace in Israel.

Chapter 14

A New Financial System

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bound, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: Rev.13:16

And that no man might buy or sell, save that he had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Rev.13:17

"Denise," Sam called over the noise in the lunchroom. "Did you hear the news this morning?"

Denise placed her tray next to his and sat down. "No, I was in a meeting all morning. What did they say?"

"The leader of the new Islamic World Order just finished signing a peace treaty with Israel. This Mahdi guy is not wasting any time. He has been busy ever since he arrived here."

"Wow," Denise remarked. "It's just like Pastor Glenn was telling us the other day. This guy must be the Antichrist of the Bible prophecies. No one knew who or where he was, and then all of a sudden, he just seemed to come out of nowhere and reached a position of prominence in such a short time?"

"I know. One day Iran and the rest of the Islamic world are ready to blow Israel off the face of the planet without so much as blinking an eye. Now in less than two weeks, a new Islamic leader appears from nowhere and convinces every Islamic government that he is Allah's representative. The next thing we know, they are signing a peace treaty with Israel. That is something I never thought would come to pass. They are all following him blindly."

"It's just so amazing how fast everything seems to fall into line with the prophecy," observed Denise. "Pastor Glenn has been sharing so much about what the Bible says is going to take place over the next seven years. The only thing is that it is happening so fast. I didn't think they would go this rapidly."

"Not to change the subject, but did you get Tom's message last night?"

"Yes, I did. He said he's coming to New York this Sunday for a meeting

of vice presidents at the main headquarters of the World Bank of the United Nations."

"Really? Will he be able to come down to Florida while he's here?"

"Yes, he is. He's looking forward to meeting Pastor Glenn in person and hearing for himself all the information we've been relaying to him."

"How's he been doing since Penny and Tommy disappeared?"

"He's still pretty shook up, but he says he's willing to listen to Pastor Glenn with an open mind," replied Denise. "That's quite a change for him. I can't put my finger on it, but something seems to have changed in him. I mean even more than what happened to us. Oh well, at least things seem to be getting back to normal a little bit."

At that moment, Jim Simpson, a programmer working in Sam's department, walked over to them and said, "Hey Sam, you've got a phone call."

"Who is it?"

"I'm not sure, but they want you to give them an explanation on how the Ana-chip works."

"Can't you or one of the other programmers give them that information?"

"I probably could, but they want to talk to the person in charge of the Programming and Technical Department, and that's you."

"Okay," said Sam. "Tell them I'll be there in a moment. It looks like my lunch is canceled for the time being. I'll see you later, Denise."

"Okay," she replied. "Let me know if you decide to take a break later."

Sam returned to his office and spent the next hour and a half trying to explain the chip's workings to the man on the other end of the line.

"Are all the arrangements made for the trip to New York," asked the Mahdi. "I am hoping we can get the cooperation of the World Bank and start setting up the new monetary system as quickly as possible."

"Yes, sir," replied his assistant. "The hotel reservations have been made at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City, and your private jet will be landing at the airport on Sunday afternoon. Your meeting with the World Bank executives has been scheduled for 10 a.m. Monday morning and your financial advisors will meet you there with all the information they have been able to come up with on the new system. They will give you a presentation that they have prepared. They assure me that it will be

according to your requirements.”

“Excellent, make sure that everything is in place.”

“Yes, sir. It will be as you asked.” The assistant bowed and exited the room.

Tom arrived at La Guardia airport in New York City. After claiming his luggage, he caught a taxi to his hotel. He checked in, put his bags in his room then went down to the restaurant for supper.

As he ate, his thoughts kept returning to Penny. He had first met Penny here in this very city. He had been a banking intern at the time. Oh, how time flies. He had come to America to work and put in his time at the head office of the World Bank. As a young man, he had always been interested in money and finance. He started his first business when he was twelve to earn extra spending money. In college, he had majored in Business and Finance, and when he graduated, he had managed to land a job at the World Bank. He had not planned to meet anyone, much less fall in love and get married. Penny had been working at the United Nations for the summer as a tour guide when they met.

They had had a whirlwind courtship, and when it was time for him to return to London, he asked her to marry him. The proposal was out of the blue. Penny did not expect it at all. He remembered just how surprised she was when he had asked her. That had been just over twelve years ago. Now he was back in the city as a senior vice president for a meeting to set up a new banking system for what was being called the new Islamic World Order. He wished she and Tommy could be here to see it. He missed them sorely.

He and several other top-ranking banking officials had been called upon by this Islamic New World Order. They were tasked with helping the new system come up with ways to merge all currencies around the world into a single financial system. They would be meeting the Mahdi and explaining their ideas to him. Since morning, he was bent over his paperwork, familiarizing himself with the information that he was about to present in the meeting. But it was a herculean task. His thoughts kept returning to Tommy and Penny and how much he was missing them. He also thought of the conversations he'd been having on the phone with Sam and Denise and wondered if what they had been telling him could be true.

They and their pastor were convinced that this Mahdi was the Antichrist mentioned in the Bible. They pointed out how quickly his rise to power was and how the entire Islamic world had almost overnight embraced him as their leader. They also pointed out that countries, many of whom had never really gotten along together in the past, were now seemingly all working

together to join themselves into one nation as a people. A nation that didn't seem to have any borders because the people were living all over the world, but no matter where they were living, they were all embracing this man as their new religious leader.

As he looked around the room, he observed people dressed in traditional Muslim apparel. He never realized before there were so many of them around. It seemed like one out of every three or four people he saw around him that evening were Muslims. But of course, that made sense. With the disappearance of so many people in the West, the Islamic nations had become the new superpowers of the world.

The next morning Tom sat and listened as the men representing the Mahdi tried to explain how they wanted to incorporate the banking industry into a Sharia-compliant system that all Muslims would use apart from the rest of the world. Under Muslim law, charging interest on loans was strictly prohibited, which was totally contrary to the western model of banking.

In order to access the system, Muslims would use a debit card instead of currency. They explained that the ATMs would need state-of-the-art programming so that the computer could automatically compensate for the differences in the currency exchange rates of the various countries within microseconds. Everything had to be set up so that each account and the store, restaurant, or other business would accurately adjust the balance no matter where in the world they were located. Jim Anderson, one of the vice presidents at the World Bank, was talking about how this might be a useful setup for everyone in the world and not just the Islamic countries. The Mahdi was quite agreeable and seemed to be perfectly ready to share the technology.

After the meeting was over, Tom went back to his hotel room. It seemed to him that everyone at the bank had been totally in favor of this new financial system that the Mahdi's people wanted and were ready to help move everyone in the world over to the contemporary cashless society. While the central European banks have been talking about this for some time in order to prevent people from hoarding cash rather than spend it to stimulate the economy, he had been marveling all day at just how smoothly this Mahdi person had been able to manipulate everyone and how none of his comrades seemed to notice that they had just been going right along with everything he had been proposing. It seemed like everybody had been dumbed down all of a sudden. They didn't put up any resistance. They were ready to hand over the entire world's financial system in the hands of the Mahdi.

It would take a while for everything to be put in place, but before the end of the year, if things kept going as they were, everyone in the world would have one of these new debit cards. The card the Mahdi's people

described would need to have a microchip built into it that would be able to hold each individual's entire financial record. It would keep track of how much money they had in their account, how much money they earned, fewer taxes, and would update their account every time someone made a transaction anywhere in the world. It would also enable a central system to account for what each person had in their account accurately. It was something that Internal Revenue Services had been dreaming of forever. No longer would terrorists and criminals be able to hide money, and people could no longer work "off the books." Now governments would know immediately how much income tax a person truly owed.

The next morning he checked out of the hotel, went to the airport, and caught a flight to Florida. He desperately wanted to see Sam and Denise. The last time they had gotten together was when they came to London on their previous vacation to see him and Penny. There were a lot of things that he wanted to discuss with them.

When he returned to Tehran, the Mahdi was met by Gamal Rashid, one of his finance aides.

"I've been doing some more research for you, sir," said Gamal. "And I think I may have come across something that may be even better than everyone having a debit card."

"What do you mean?" asked the Mahdi. "I don't want a system that relies on any currency. I need something that can hold all the transactions in a single unit."

"Yes, sir, but I have been thinking that a card, even a single card with a microchip for everything, may not be the best answer."

"Why not? A single card is easier to keep track of than several different cards that people are using now, don't you think?"

"Yes, sir, a single card with a microchip is better than several cards, but I am thinking that not having to carry a card at all would be even better."

"But how would we be able to keep track of everything? We need to control who can buy and sell so that we can control their lives and ensure they are only making purchases in compliance with Islamic Sharia law."

"I've been researching something on the internet, and I found a company called Ana-chip. It has an office in the state of Florida, in the United States of America. I spoke to a man there in charge of the technical and programming departments. He was very helpful and emailed me all the information on the microchip they have been working on. It is about the size of a grain of rice and can be implanted right under the skin. Right now, they have only been using them in animals so that a lost pet can be found

and returned to the rightful owner. All the information is programmed into the chip before it is injected under the skin of the animal.”

“But if it is only being used to locate lost pets, what good is it for my purposes,” asked the Mahdi.

“The chip can store all of the veterinary records of the animal as well, and the company is looking into possible human uses. The company feels the chip can hold all of a person’s medical records so they will have everything they need with them if they have to go to a new doctor or in an emergency. So, if someone has a car accident and is taken to the nearest hospital, the doctors can access all his information without any hassles. It would help in cases where the injured person is unconscious or otherwise unable to speak for themselves. The paramedic or other emergency personnel would have all of their medical history at their fingertips, such as any allergies they may have. They would also have a list of prescription medications to prevent mixing of medications that would have bad reactions with each other.”

“Are they injecting them into people right now?”

“No, not at this time. They are still experiencing some issues of rejection and local skin irritations because the body views the chip as a foreign substance and tries to absorb it.”

“Then what good is it going to be,” inquired the Mahdi impatiently. “If the body rejects it or is so irritated by it that no one wants to have it implanted.”

Gamal explained, “They think they are on the verge of solving the problem, and the chip will be able to hold all the information you want it to, as well as being reprogrammable, even once inside the body. You can start the system with a debit card, and when the chip has been perfected, you can have everyone in the world switch over to the Ana-chip. There will no longer be any need for them to keep a card. If the chip is implanted, say, into the back of the hand, all a person will have to do is to reach out and let their hand be scanned. The chip will provide all of the necessary information. It can then be updated with any new information about the person or their account.”

“That’s a good idea. Keep working on it and tell me the feasibility once you’re done.”

When Tom arrived in Florida, Sam and Denise met him at the airport and took him back to their house. Later that evening, Pastor Glenn came over to the house for supper and to meet Tom. He had changed since the day everybody had disappeared. At the time, he was a defeated old man who didn’t know what to do with himself. This Pastor Glenn was someone

who resembled the Pastor Glenn before he had let himself go with the current. The eyes had the deep and searching look in them. The fire in his belly was burning again. This was Pastor Glenn on a mission. He finally knew what his purpose was and he wasn't going to let it go this time. He felt the power in him. He felt the presence of the Lord in and around him. He knew what he had to do – what he was *meant* to do. And he would either complete it or die trying.

After finishing the meal, he spent a couple of hours talking about all of the prophecies of the messiah and how Jesus fulfilled them all perfectly. He also told him about the prophecies of the rapture, the Antichrist, and the coming seven-year tribulation.

“So you really think this Mahdi person is actually the Antichrist?” asked Tom.

“Well,” replied Pastor Glenn, “he has come out of nowhere and united all of Islam very quickly. They are now the world's largest remaining religion, with people in just about every country of the world. Before the rapture, there were over seven billion people on the earth. Christians made up almost two billion, while Muslims were close behind between 1.6 and 1.8 billion people. Now that the Christians are all gone, that leaves just over five billion people left. Muslims, now, roughly make up one out of every three people. The book of Revelation says that the Antichrist will unite the world, sign a peace treaty with Israel and allow them to rebuild the Temple. That has already happened. He will then set up a worldwide religion. Since Islam is already spread throughout the world, it wouldn't take too much for it to be that religion, especially now that the Muslim countries are the pre-eminent world power.

The hardest part will be setting up the financial system which will force everybody in the world to take the mark of the beast, as it's called in the book of Revelation, in order to buy and sell anything.”

“Funny you should say that,” Tom noted, “but that was the exact reason for my meeting in New York yesterday.”

“What do you mean?”

“This Mahdi person is trying to set up a new financial system to unite all Islamic nations along with all the Muslims from around the world with the help of the World Bank. They plan to use a credit system instead of regular money with a programmable debit card to keep track of each person's account transactions. At this point, it is strictly for the Islamic banking system, but I could see how it could easily transfer over to our system as well. You should have seen the way some of the western bank leaders were agreeing to the system. They cannot wait for it to come over to our side.”

“That's very interesting,” Sam said. “I recently had a phone call from a

representative of the Mahdi. I talked with him for nearly two hours about all the possible applications of our Ana-chip and how it might be able to be modified to hold all of a person's financial records."

"Do you think they could incorporate this chip for the purpose," inquired Pastor Glenn.

"If we get the rejection factor worked out, there would be no problem using it for any purpose," said Sam. "You wouldn't need a card either. You could just implant it under the skin."

"That would become the mark of the beast. This is beyond what I expected. They are moving really fast. But there's good news too. Here we have people involved with the new system and who would be unique to help those who don't want to accept the mark because of their fear of God. The Bible says that God will punish whoever takes the mark but will seal His own people and keep them from the judgment of His wrath."

"What do you mean that we are in a unique position?" asked Tom.

"You are at the World Bank in a vice president's position. Do you think you could create a secret account that can pull tiny amounts of credit from everyone else's account and funnel them to where we, or other believers that we help, could access with relative ease?"

"It would take some doing, and I would need the help of an exceptional programmer. Not to mention that I would have to put my neck on the line. But since we are setting up a brand-new system, I think it could be done."

"Okay, how about it, Sam? Do you think you could handle the programming?"

"Yeah," answered Sam. "I think so. With Tom's help, I could create an unknown password into the program, and we could tap into it from time to time to set it up. With my own password, I can have a backdoor that bypasses any security and make any adjustments as needed."

"Okay," continued Pastor Glenn. "Now, what about this chip you're trying to develop? Is it anywhere near being able to be used in people?"

"We're pretty close," replied Sam. "There's a new plastic that we just got in that is supposed to be hypoallergenic. If we can get the components put together, we will probably be testing in a matter of weeks or months."

"Do you really think we should be helping them develop this thing?" asked Denise. "Aren't we just helping them create the mark of the beast?"

"If we don't, there are several other companies around the world that are already working on it. Suppose we aren't in the loop on this. In that case, we won't be able to access the account once the chip is developed, especially if the servers are in another country."

“We need to find other people who are believers and have realized what has happened,” remarked Pastor Glenn. “That way, we can set up some kind of a network ahead of time and be prepared.”

“What can I do to help,” inquired Denise.

“You’re the head of the sales and marketing department,” noted Sam. “From there, you’ll be able to divert the chips as we need them so I can reprogram them in a way to avoid detection when they’re used. We want all traces of this kind of activity with these diverted chips to be erased immediately after transactions are made so whoever’s using them won’t be found out.”

“Use of those special chips will have to be limited only to food and bare necessities,” Sam added.

Pastor Glenn had a gleam in his eye as he said, “We had better get started working on this right away. The only way this will work is if we stay a step or two ahead of the Mahdi. Once this system is in place for the Muslims, anyone doing business with them, like buying oil, will eventually have to join the system somehow. This will eventually enable him to be in control of all of the world’s finances. Once that occurs, it will be a lot easier for him to start controlling the world. Once he is completely in control, the next logical step would be for him to make Islam the only accepted religion.”

Chapter 15
The New Priesthood

Isaac answered the front door. “Benny, Rachel,” he called. “Come in here and bring my grandchildren with you.”

“Are we the first ones here?” asked Rachel.

“Yes,” Isaac replied. “Sammy and Leah called to say that they were caught in traffic and would be running a little late. Danny got an emergency call and is in surgery at the hospital.”

“What about Joe and Ruth?”

“They called to say that Joe Jr. is sick and they wouldn’t be able to make it over this morning for brunch, but they will try to come and visit sometime next week.”

“What about the girls,” Ben asked.

“They are on the way.”

“We are a bit early,” Rachel said almost apologetically.

“That’s okay,” Isaac reassured her warmly. “This will give me more time with my grandsons.”

“I see that you have the video projector and the screen set up,” noted Rachel.

“Yep, you’ll be able to see the highlights from our trip after brunch.”

“I still can’t believe some of the things you’ve already told us about,” said Ben.

“I know,” agreed Rachel. “Especially what happened just before you arrived at Jerusalem.”

“Yeah,” Ben continued. “And what happened the next day at the Temple Mount. It really sounds like you both had some very unusual experiences.”

“Well, you experienced some of it here, too,” Isaac offered as if prompting further conversation on this topic.

“Oh, you mean the disappearances and the attacks?” Ben asked. “Trust me when I say, we didn’t have a clue as to what was happening. One minute they were there, the next, they were gone. And the bombs went off at the same time. But it was nothing like what happened at the Temple Mount.”

Hearing a knock at the door, Rebecca opened it to find Sam, Leah, and the kids.

“Are we too late?” they asked.

“No,” replied Rebecca. “You’re just in time. Isaac and Benny were just talking about the trip again.”

Sam walked into the room to find his father and brother still talking about the Temple Mount trip and the visit later on that day by the police detectives.

“So,” asked Sam. “Do you think that the two detectives were right? Do you think the strangers were just another couple of kooks?”

“I don’t know,” Isaac replied thoughtfully. “They seemed pretty convincing to me, but the detectives said they weren’t the first ones to show up looking and acting like that.”

“Did anything else strange happen on your trip after that?”

“No, the rest of it was pretty subdued after that.”

“Well, I hope you and Mom enjoyed your trip, despite all the extra excitement you had,” Ben said.

“Oh, we did,” said Isaac with a smile remembering their holiday. “We really did. It was great.”

“Mr. Prime Minister,” came the voice of his secretary over the intercom.

“Yes, what is it,” said the Prime Minister.

“The Minister of Religious Affairs is here to see you.”

“Send him in. Then you can go ahead and go home.”

“You can go on in,” said the secretary.

“Thank you,” replied Jim Feingold, the Israeli Minister of Religious Affairs, as he opened the door and walked in.

“How are you doing, Jim,” asked the Prime Minister. “What brings you to my office today?”

“I’m fine, David. I came here to talk to you about the Temple.”

“What about it?”

“Since you signed the treaty with the Mahdi the other day, we need to decide who is going to do the cleanup work. After that, we need to find someone for designing and building the new temple.”

“Do you have anybody in particular in mind for the job?”

“No, but we are going to need to start accepting some bids from companies pretty soon.”

“Is that all?”

“We also need to appoint a new High Priest and reestablish the priesthood to start the sacrificial system up again, don’t you think?”

“Funny that you should mention that. We were just discussing a possible candidate for you.”

Jim turned and looked at the police commissioner, who had been talking to the Prime Minister.”

“It’s good to see you again, Jim,” said the commissioner as he walked over to shake his hand.

“What do you mean you were discussing possibilities? Have you two been looking for someone already?”

“No, not looking yet,” replied the Prime Minister.

“I was just talking to David about a couple of my detectives,” the commissioner said.

“Are they any potential priests?”

“No, but they filed a report about someone who might be.”

Isaac and the rest of the family sat around the dining room table, finishing their weekly Sunday brunch when the telephone rang. Rebecca got up from the table and walked into the living room to answer the phone. On the other end, she heard someone ask for Isaac. When she asked who was calling and their concern, the man just told her he needed to speak to Isaac as soon as possible.

Rebecca walked back to the dining room table. “Isaac, it’s for you.”

“Who is it?”

“He wouldn’t say.”

“Okay, let me go see what’s so important.”

Isaac went into the living room and picked up the phone.

“Hello. This is Isaac. Who am I speaking to?”

“Hello, Isaac. I’m sorry to disturb you on a Sunday. I have something significant to discuss with you. This is the Prime Minister of Israel.”

Isaac was stunned. Why would the Prime Minister be calling him? Then it dawned on him.

“Ha ha. Very funny. You actually sound like him. You’ve really prepared yourself. Did David put you up to this?”

“I’m glad I sound like him. I don’t know any David. At least not any David that we would know mutually. And I am the Prime Minister of Israel. This is not a prank call. I am going to give you the number for my office. You can call back and see who picks up.”

“Okay. Okay. So you’re telling me that you really are the Prime Minister of Israel?”

“Yes, Isaac. Look, I don’t have a lot of time to explain things. I need you to do something for me. Can we talk, or are you still thinking it’s David?”

“No sir. I believe you. What can I do for you, sir?”

“Now, this is something out of the blue. I can’t have you asking a lot of questions. I am giving you some instructions, and you are to follow them to the letter. Got it?”

“Yes, sir. I got it.”

“I want you and your son, Benjamin, to come back to Israel. Also, I want you to bring the scale model of the temple that you two were working on along with any charts and drawings that you have related to the temple.”

“Yes sir. Let me talk to my son and get back to you. I’m sure he will be as thrilled as I am.”

“Also, I need you to send me any information that you have about Benjamin’s construction experience.”

The Prime Minister then went on to ask Isaac about his ancestry and if he could provide any documents about it. Isaac told him that he had downloaded everything onto his computer and offered to send the Prime Minister an e-mail with a copy of the file.

The Prime Minister said, "I will have my secretary make the plane reservations and hotel accommodations for both you and Benjamin."

"Oh, thank you," Isaac said. He was quite surprised, and he knew it showed in his voice.

"Good. I will be looking forward to meeting both of you in person in a couple of days."

Isaac hung up the phone, walked back to the dining room table, and said, "You’ll never guess in a million years who was on the phone."

The Prime Minister hung up the phone and turned back to the Police Commissioner and the Minister of Religious Affairs.

“I think we may have just found ourselves a brand new High Priest along with the person who will be doing the construction.”

“How do you know for sure that he really is a descendant of Aaron,” Jim asked.

“He’s going to e-mail me a copy of all his documentation. He and his son are going to be in Jerusalem the day after tomorrow. I’m going to have my secretary make all the arrangements in the morning when she comes in.”

“Will you make me a copy so I can go ahead and start trying to verify all of the information,” Jim asked.

“I’ll forward it to you just as soon as I get it. He briefly told me what was in the file. He claims to have names, dates, and locations of the synagogues that his family has attended or been in charge of all the way back to before the destruction of Jerusalem.”

“Well, if I can verify all the names and dates in that file, you just could be right. Most of the synagogues keep pretty good records on the births, deaths, marriages, and things like that they perform. If we can trace him back to the temple, this could be a whole lot easier than I thought it was going to be.”

“Do you really think the man you were talking to on the phone was actually the Prime Minister of Israel?” asked Rebecca.

“Trust me. At first, I thought it was a prank. But he gave me the number to call back, and it was an Israeli number. Also, he had all the information that we gave to Detectives Steinman and Greenberg,” answered Isaac. “He could only have gotten it from the two of them. I’ll call the airport tomorrow and verify the plane reservations while you make arrangements to take off, okay Benny?”

“Sure,” said Ben. “I’ll just call Rachel’s brother and have him watch over everything. He’s usually the one we use when we go on vacation.”

“We need to pack up all the charts and the scale model of the temple for traveling,” said Isaac. “Oh, and don’t forget the layouts you drew up for that architecture class you took back in college for your degree.”

“I’ll get some wood and foam rubber for padding and construct a carrying case for the model. By the way, when are we leaving?”

“Tomorrow evening, I think. I’ll check the plane reservations just to be sure.”

“That’s pretty short notice, but we’ll be ready.”

“We’re going to Israel.” Isaac could not believe it. He said it a couple of times, but every time it sounded as incredulous as before. Ben came to the rescue. “Yes, Dad. We are going to Israel. It’s not a dream.”

“It looks like you’re finally going to get your dream,” observed Rebecca, smiling.

“Yeah,” agreed Isaac, “I never actually thought it would happen to me. Are you sure you’re going to be all right while I’m gone?”

“Yes, I’ll just go and stay with Rachel and the boys.”

“What time are the Levinsons supposed to arrive?” inquired the Minister of Religious Affairs.

“Their plane should be touching down at the airport around 11 a.m. the day after tomorrow,” replied the Prime Minister. “I’ll be there to meet them, and then they will be taken to the Jerusalem Hotel to rest up for a few hours and have lunch. They should be in my office around 3 p.m.”

Two days later, the Prime Minister met Isaac and Ben at the airport and had a driver take them to the hotel to settle in and have lunch.

That afternoon the Prime Minister met with Isaac and Ben and talked to them about constructing the new temple and about Isaac becoming the new High Priest. They also spoke about how the Mahdi had made arrangements for the shipment of many of the materials they would need to get started on the new temple: cedar trees from Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. There was even money to pay for the gold, silver, and other precious metals they would need to recreate everything in Solomon’s Temple. Skilled laborers from all over Israel were lining up to be in on the project. Woodcarvers, metalsmiths, and carpenters worldwide wanted to be a part of history and help rebuild the temple. Ben had selected a local construction company to work with, and the cleanup process was well underway.

Isaac talked to Sam, Dan, and Joe, and they were all excited about the prospect of being priests in the new temple. They and their families were being flown over. All five men were going to be fitted for their priestly robes that would be made according to the Torah’s description. After they arrived, each of the men went through a ritual meant to prepare them for their new positions. Isaac talked to Ben about how long he thought it would take to finish constructing the new temple.

“It took Solomon seven years,” answered Ben. “But with modern technology, equipment, and tools, we have maybe about a year to a year and a half.”

“I can’t believe that after all this time, the temple is actually about to be rebuilt,” said Isaac.

Chapter 16
Mark of the Beast

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man: and his number is six hundred a threescore and six. (666) Rev. 13:18

“Can you believe it?” asked Denise.

“Believe what?” inquired Sam as he sat down at the breakfast table.

“The newspaper.”

“What about it?”

“The Israelis say they’ve found a descendent of Aaron to be their new High Priest, and they’ve started clearing the site for the new temple.”

“Are you sure?”

“That’s what it says in the paper.”

“How were they able to find someone so soon?” asked Sam.

“It seems that this random guy was visiting Israel on a heritage tour with his wife a couple of weeks ago. They just happened to be at the Temple Mount the same day that the two strangers first appeared there. They were interviewed by the local police later that same afternoon about what they saw, and they found out that the guy could trace his history back to the old days. His family is supposed to be the caretakers of the temple back in the day. Everything just seemed to fall into place from there.”

“Seems too good to be true. And in the aftermath of what’s happening, it seems that God planned it all for them,” noted Sam.

“Yeah, I’m really starting to see the hand of God working everywhere. I never thought that everything would move this quickly.”

“Me neither.”

“Are you ready for our trip to London?” asked Denise.

“Yeah,” responded Sam. “My team at work is going to be trying something new with the chip while we’re gone. They tell me they’re hoping to have a major breakthrough by the time we get back home.”

“Do you have everything you’ll need to hack into the World Bank’s

computer system?”

“I think so,” Sam replied.

“I have all my data and the preprogrammed chips ready. I’m going to place them on the computer once we get there. Once I’m able to install them, they should do the job. We should be able to move small enough sums of credit from every account not to be noticed. Tom says he has made all the arrangements to get me in so I can help set up and program the system. I should be able to install the necessary microchips and get my back door password set up at the same time. After that, it will be smooth sailing, no matter what kind of security programs they add later. After it’s up and running, I will make adjustments to the system when necessary.”

“How was Tom able to get you clearance to be able to work on the new system?” asked Denise.

“He was able to convince the Mahdi that if the Ana-chip ever became viable, I would have to be the one to integrate it into the system,” replied Sam. “Because of that, I needed to be in on the original programming stages, and the Mahdi agreed. Also, with all of the companies in Silicon Valley being out of action due to the disappearances, there really is no one else with my level of expertise in this area.”

“Is Tom going to meet us at the airport when we arrive?”

“Yes, he said that since Penny and Tommy are gone, he has more than enough room for us. He’ll sleep in Tommy’s room, and we can stay in his and Penny’s room. I’ll accompany him to the bank every day, and hopefully, everything will be set up in a few weeks.”

Tom met them at the airport the next afternoon and took them back to his home. Every day he took Sam to the bank to work with the programmers setting up the master computer for the new financial system.

Each day Sam managed to find enough time alone with the computer so that he was able to replace specific microchips in the main memory bank. He removed key chips and replaced them with chips that contained the special code. When the last chip was finally installed, he now had an untraceable circuit that he could use to pull out the needed funds. Once the funds had been removed from their original accounts, they would be transferred to a special account Tom had created. After two weeks of working on the system, the job was finally finished, and Sam and Denise prepared to return home to Florida.

“Are you sure everything’s going to work the way you want it to?” inquired Tom.

“We’ll find out when the system goes online in a couple of weeks,” responded Sam. “But I don’t think there should be any problems with it.”

“Is your password working okay? They were adding some new security measures to the system just this morning.”

“Yeah, I think so. I ran a check on it just before you came in. I was able to get into the system without any problems.”

“Well, I’ll keep you updated with everything on this end.”

“Okay,” Sam said. “It was good to see you again. Come visit us in Florida anytime you want to.”

Tom drove Sam and Denise back to the airport where they caught a plane back to America.

“How was your trip, boss?” inquired Ted Clancy, one of Sam’s technical designers working on the chip.

“We had a good visit,” replied Sam.

“We had a breakthrough with the chip the day after you left.”

“Oh yeah, what kind of breakthrough?”

“We finished the chip and put the new plastic coating on it.”

“So, how is it working?”

“Great. In fact, it tested so well that I decided to go ahead and have the chip implanted in a human subject.”

“You did what?” asked Sam incredulously.

“I had Terry go ahead and implant the chip under my skin. So far, there don’t appear to be any problems.”

“Let me see.”

“Here it is. We put it in the back of my hand.”

Sam took Ted’s hand and examined it closely. He turned it over multiple times to see if the chip was visible. He couldn’t see anything except a single mark.

“Have you had any problems with it?”

“No, nothing major anyway. There was some minor swelling when it was first implanted, but that went away after just a couple of days.”

“What’s this mark on your hand?”

“No one seems to know. That’s the one minor side effect that we’ve found.”

“Does it bother you?”

“Not at all. I really don’t even notice it much anymore. It just seemed to appear at the site of the implantation after a few days, but since then, it doesn’t seem to have gotten any bigger.”

“But it doesn’t bother you? There’s no itching, redness, inflammation, or any other signs of irritation?”

“No, most of the time, I don’t even notice it’s there.”

“Well, we really should do some more testing to try and find out if it’s going to bother anyone else when they use it.”

“We’ve already implanted it into ten different people with no signs of rejection,” Ted said. The excitement in his voice was uncontrollable.

“What! Who approved that level of testing?”

“Believe it or not, this came all the way from the top. I mean the President of the United States. He said it could be vital to national security.”

Sam could feel the anger rising inside. “I don’t care if it was the President of the United States or France, or whatever. They are not the experts here. How can they give the green signal without my consent? What if someone reacted? You think I want that on my conscience?”

“Sorry, boss. We just do what the orders tell us to do. This time, they came directly from the Big Eagle, and it was clear. We had to move up our timetable. I guess somebody is in a hell of a hurry to get these chips ready.”

“What else did they say?” Sam knew taking his anger out on Ted would not accomplish anything. He was just doing his job. He was like an excited teenager at times, but he was always thorough when it concerned his work. Sam had never found him to be unethical or otherwise. And come to think of it, Sam was also curious about how people were handling the chip. There was a bit of a mad scientist in him too, who would ignore the risks completely if the outcome was great.

“Nothing much. Just that we have to hurry up with the human trials and report everything back to them.”

“Are you sure there have been no ill effects at all? None of the subjects are showing any adverse effects?”

“No,” replied Ted, thankful that Sam’s anger was dissipating. “They’ve all just experienced the initial swelling and then after a few days the appearance of the mark you see here.”

“Everyone who had the chip implanted has the same mark?”

“Yeah. The skin seems to have the exact same reaction in everyone, strange huh. It leaves a raised, discolored, rough patch at the site where the chip was implanted under the skin.”

“Okay, send me all your reports. I want to look at all your findings concerning the implantations. After that, I’ll see about placing a phone call to the Mahdi to see about setting up a demonstration if I think everything is ready.”

“Oh,” said Ted, “I’ve already placed a call to his office.”

“You did what?” Sam asked, the anger rising again. As the head of programming, nothing should have been done regarding marketing the chip without his approval. How could Ted go ahead and break the chain of command?

“I went ahead and called and told him about our success with the new chip. They said the Mahdi was very excited about the advances we’ve made, and he would be flying in tomorrow afternoon to talk to you about it.”

“You went behind my back and talked to the Mahdi without consulting me first?”

“I tried to reach you while you were in London, but you were always out and never returned any of my phone calls.”

“What are you talking about? I never received any voicemails.”

“Well, I didn’t think you’d mind if I gave him a call,” said Ted.

Sam sensed that something was afoot. Ted never used to be this way. This was the first time Sam had left him in charge, and the results were plain to see. Sam decided to let it go and see where he ended up. There was no benefit in raising the issue, especially if Ted was one of the people who believed in the Mahdi and what he was supposed to be.

“It’s okay,” muttered Sam. “It’s just that I would have liked a little more time to go over all this new material you’ve collected on the chip before he got here.”

“Here’s all the written documentation concerning the chip. Overall it’s not too different from everything we had before we added the new plastic coating. All of the previous problems we were experiencing seem to have disappeared.”

“Okay,” replied Sam. “Good job Ted. I guess I’ll go home early and start looking over everything. I need to prepare myself before the Mahdi arrives.”

The next afternoon the Mahdi arrived for his meeting with Sam and was informed of the implantation results.

“So there’ve been no signs of rejection at all?” asked the Mahdi.

“None,” answered Sam, “other than the rough, discolored mark on the skin at the site of the implantation, there hasn’t been any other sign of a problem.”

“How long have the chips been implanted?”

“Only about two weeks.”

“Is that long enough time to determine if there will be any problems?”

“I think we should give it at least another month,” replied Sam. “We need time to make sure the hypoallergenic plastic won’t break down. That should be long enough to determine if the chip is going to be rejected by the body.”

“Will it be able to work like the debit cards people have been using for the past several years?”

“With the use of a chip reader, people will be able to access their account to make all the necessary financial transactions.”

“How about the other things we discussed as additional possibilities for the use of the chip, beyond the financial aspects?”

“Yes, of course,” replied Sam. “The chips will all be programmed with three sets of six digits. They will have a combination of keyboard symbols: like the dash, backslash, exclamation point, plus and star. The combination will also include both upper and lower case letters and the numbers zero through nine. About thirty symbols will be combined with fifty-two letters since they can be in upper and lower case and the ten numbers. These digits used in random combinations will provide you with more than enough possible combinations to cover everyone in the world, much less all of your people. The combinations could be ‘#3aA>9’, for example, or it could contain more or fewer numbers or symbols. It could be just about any combination that you can think of. One set of digits could be used to access financial records, and another could be used to access personal history. This includes birth date, physical description, school records, work history, or even military or police records. It could list birthmarks, tattoos, and scars as well. People won’t have to fill out resumes; the potential employer could just access their work file. The last set of digits could be used to access their medical history, including a list of medications that they’re taking and any allergies that they might have, as well as any broken bones or surgeries they’ve had.”

“Wow!” exclaimed the Mahdi. “It’s just so amazing that a little chip like

this would be able to hold all of the information that you're talking about."

"You seriously don't think that this chip can hold all of that information, do you?" asked Sam.

"Isn't that what you were just telling me?" asked the Mahdi. His face had a puzzled look on his face that Sam secretly enjoyed. He was a Mahdi or whatever, but that didn't mean he knew everything.

"No, not at all," explained Sam. "This chip is way too small to be able to do all of that."

"Then just what does it do?"

"This chip is a radio frequency identification device, or RFID, for short."

"I don't understand."

"This chip only gives off a small signal to a chip reader."

"What kind of signal?"

"This chip only holds the three six-digit combinations that I was telling you about," said Sam. "It's way too small to carry all of a person's information, especially constantly updating everything the way that you want it to."

"Then what good is it to me?" asked the Mahdi in a somewhat exasperated tone.

"Am I just wasting my time here?"

"This device gives a scanner code," explained Sam. "That code will allow a computer that is stored in a central location to access the information. The computer set up for the World Bank's financial system in London is a good example of what I'm talking about. That computer holds a person's financial records. The amount of programming needed to hold all of a person's financial records and be continually updated with new information could never be held in a single chip. The code is read from the chip and gives access to the records; the computer transmits a sale transaction, deducts the amount needed, and updates the file. You will have three different readers to read the three different codes and access three different files stored in three different computers. Most people won't need more than one combination, but two combinations may be required in some cases. For example, a hospital updating medical information may need to charge payment. Of course, your office would have a special reader that would be able to access all three of the different accounts."

"Then this is no different than having a debit card, is it?" asked the Mahdi.

“The difference is that a card can be lost, broken, or stolen, but not the chip. Plus, if you’re in an accident, you don’t have to be able to respond to the emergency personnel for them to be able to get your information. Once the chip is implanted, you’ll always have it with you, and no one can take it away from you. If the chip is removed, it stops transmitting the code.”

“Okay,” said the Mahdi, “I guess that does give it an advantage over the card. My people will contact you in about a month to coordinate the chips and the readers’ delivery. Meanwhile, I guess they will need to start setting up locations for the servers. Also, start collecting all of the information we will need to get from everybody.”

That night Sam, Denise, and Pastor Glenn discussed everything happening over the past few days. Sam told them that the chip was ready and that the Mahdi would soon be taking possession of it.

“I guess that explains it,” said Pastor Glenn.

“Explains what?” asked Denise.

“Both the mark of the beast and the 6-6-6.”

Pastor Glenn had been continuously researching while Sam and Denise were away. More and more people were contacting him, and he was determined to give them what answers he could find out. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that he had become quite an authority on the rapture and everything that came with it. The only problem was that the more he researched, the more it frightened him. This game was being played at a whole another level, and Pastor Glenn wasn’t sure he was in the same league as the Mahdi or any of his cohorts. He had once been denied entry into heaven when every Christian had been taken but him. This had really shattered his confidence. He had wallowed in self-loathing for some time, but the Lord had finally spoken to him. He knew that he still had another shot and wasn’t about to miss the last opportunity.

“Yeah,” observed Sam, “it’s not three sixes; it’s three sets of six-digit combinations. The mark of the beast is the mark left on the skin from implanting the chip, not a secret symbol or code placed on the skin.”

“How are we going to distribute the rest of our chips?” inquired Denise.

“I’ve had several different people contacting me,” stated Pastor Glenn. “Most of them saw my original interview on what I thought had happened, and they contacted me with questions. Others just heard about me lately from people they know and called or wrote. Some of them I have already written off. Still, some of the rest could be what we need to set up a sort of skeletal network to distribute the chips to people and help them out once the new financial system is in place and takes hold. Of course, we’ve got to be very careful who we confide in.”

“How will you know who you can trust?”

“We’ll just have to pray and trust that the Lord will guide and use us in the way that He sees fit. Maybe that’s why we’re here, to help the new Christians that turn to God during the tribulation.”

With that, they bowed their heads and thanked God for His love and mercy, and asked for His guidance in their lives.

ARE YOU READY?

Although the story in this book is fictional, it is based on actual prophecies of the end times from the Bible. The events may not occur exactly the way they are written here, but they will happen, and there is nothing in this book that has not already happened, is not happening now, or could not happen in the very near future.

Will you and your loved ones be ready? Are you 100% sure you or someone you know is going to Heaven? The Bible teaches that you can be sure. If you or anyone you know is not ready, then you need to get ready now. There are five things you need to know and only one thing you must do to be ready.

1.) You need to know that the Bible is the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16—All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2 Peter 1:21— For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

God told men what to write, and they wrote down His words in the Bible. It's like getting a letter from the president of a company; it probably was not written by him personally. He probably dictated it to his secretary, and she wrote the letter for him.

2.) You must know that Jesus is the God of the Bible.

Isaiah 9:6- For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 7:14- Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Matthew 1:23- Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

John 1:1- In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 14:9—Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Phillip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

Revelation 1:8—I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Jesus is either Almighty God or a liar.

- 3.) You must know that we are all sinners.

Romans 3:10—As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one:

Romans 3:23—For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:

We are all in the same boat: we have all done wrong.

- 4.) You must know that because of our sin, we deserve to go to Hell.

Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:12—Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

The curse of death in the Bible is spiritual death that separates us eternally from God in a place called Hell. We are made up of 3 parts, a body, a soul, and a spirit. Your soul is eternal and must dwell somewhere. If you are physically alive, you can dwell on Earth and interact with the world around you. If you are spiritually alive, you can dwell in Heaven with God. If you are spiritually dead and physically dead, you can't dwell on Earth or in Heaven, so you end up going to Hell, a place God made for the Devil and his angels.

- 5.) You must know that Christ suffered and died on the cross to pay for your sin and was buried and rose from the dead. After that, he was seen by over 500 eyewitnesses. This is exactly what the Scriptures said would happen.

Romans 5:8— But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas (Peter), then of the twelve: After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some have fallen asleep.

Jesus did all this for you, but there is still one thing you must do.

Romans 10:9-10- If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:13- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall be saved*. (not maybe, shall be)

There has to be a time when you called on Jesus to save you.

You can believe in marriage and think it is a good thing. You could have gone to several weddings where people got married, but if you have never stood up and said the vows and had someone say them to you, then you are not married.

You have to call on Jesus and ask him to be your Lord and Savior.

If you believe what you have just read, then there is one thing you must do. You need to call upon Jesus right now. Pray this simple prayer out loud:

Dear Jesus, I know you are God and that the Bible is your word. I believe that you died in my place to pay for my sin and that you rose from the dead, proving that you are God. Right now, in the best way I know how, I call upon you and ask you to be my Lord, my Savior, and my God. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me. Help me now to live for you. Amen.

(Taken from a message preached by Dr. David Teis, Senior Pastor at Liberty Baptist Church, Las Vegas, NV. Sermons by Dr. Teis can be heard at: www.experienceliberty.com and KVXL radio 101.1 in Las Vegas).