

Dear members and friends of St. John,

"Dear you hear the news? A huge asteroid is headed toward earth. If it hits us, there will be a global ice age, followed by all people and land animals dying. The government needs to do something NOW!" That's **one doomsday scenario**. The other one that's gaining popularity: "An airborne plague, transmitted by people and birds, will sweep across the earth. Without any known cure, the entire population of the earth will die." The Ebola virus has probably added renewed vigor to this scenario.

**So what's a Christian to do?** What we always do, of course. Turn to the Bible for insight. What, if anything, does the Bible have to say about the end of this earth?

### **THE END OF THIS EARTH AS WE KNOW IT**

Before we launch into this Biblical study, we should remember a few important points about Scriptures. First, no one has ever been able to discredit the Bible. Plenty have tried. There are the atheists who claim there's no evidence to support the claims of the Old Testament. Of course, modern excavations of archeological sites have shown the Old Testament to be incredibly accurate! Evidence for a global flood has been found in the most remote parts of the world. The Bible is historically accurate!

Second, God's Word is something that He created, and therefore it can be trusted and believed. From 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3: *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."* (vv. 16-17) God is the inspiration behind every written word in Scripture, and therefore we know that it's trustworthy and true.

So, **armed with the truth, what does God say about the end of the earth.**

From 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians chapter 5: *"Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that **the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night**. While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief."* The "sudden destruction" comes like "labor pains come upon a pregnant woman" – in other words, destruction comes in an instant – but not complete destruction. Like labor pains that build over time, destruction of the earth will grow until the time of birth is at hand. This "birth," or the Lord's return, will be completely unexpected: He will come like a thief in the night. No one knows the day or time, and the fact that there is "peace and security" in the land when He returns, points to a world that is functioning as usual, satisfied with earthly peace and security, without concern for the Lord or their eternal salvation.

The Bible refers to this "**time of labor**" as the **Great Tribulation**. From Revelation chapter 6, we see God's plan of salvation unfold, as seven seals are sequentially removed. This time of tribulation or trouble began at the time of Christ's ascent into heaven, and will end when He returns again in glory. Notice that trouble builds from one seal opening to the next, with the fourth and fifth seals revealing **great distress on the earth**. We can expect the condition of the earth at the end of time to be increasingly hostile to the church and true believers everywhere. Satan will have his final run at dragging as many men, women and children into hell as he can. He will be aided by the

Antichrist, a man who will influence many in the world to turn from Jesus Christ and salvation (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

And then we have **Christ's triumphal return**. From 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4: *"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words."* (vv. 16-18)

We, who believe that Christ died with our sins, and rose again on Easter morning – we who trust that He will return again glory to raise the living and the dead – “we will always be with the Lord.” This is meant for our encouragement. God will create a new earth and a new heaven - all for our eternal good. He will place us on this new earth – this new Eden (see Rev. 21:1-7) We must not be discouraged, for God's plan of salvation is that we will always be with Him! This is most certainly true.

### **TIME IS SHORT!**

If there's one abiding message that rings throughout Scriptures it's this: **today is the Day of Salvation**. Since we don't know when Christ will return, there is a **real sense of urgency** in our work to get the message of salvation to our family members and friends, coworkers and neighbors. The lost can hear the message of salvation and believe. They can take shelter, like we do, in God's holy church – receiving life through God's means of grace. God desires that everyone be saved – He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone (1 Timothy 2:4). We can be the instrument of God's salvation to someone else – and there's no greater privilege on earth.

### **SIGNS OF THE TIME**

The Bible tells us that there will be signs before Christ comes again. Jesus, Himself, says, *"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains...And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations...And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."* (Mark 13:5-8, 10, 12-13)

Notice - **no word of a large asteroid destroying life on earth**. Notice - **no word of a worldwide plague that kills off the human race**. No, just the same kind of calamity that's been happening since Christ's ascension. And in the midst of all this chaos and calamity, people will have convinced themselves that they have peace and security! But we know the truth. Jesus will come again to claim His Church on earth – and **we who will endure to the end – will be saved**. Amen.

Pastor Travis