

Where Will America Be at the End of Time?

What role will the United States play—if any—in the end times?

When *New York Times* best-selling author Joel C. Rosenberg tells audiences that America isn't mentioned in Bible prophecy, many are stunned and ask how the wealthiest, most powerful nation in history isn't a specifically defined player in the last days.

"The Bible doesn't say what happens to us," Rosenberg says. "But by the absence of us being clearly defined in the text, it means something has happened. The question is what—what will happen to us that will neutralize our ability or desire to be an influential player in the last days of history before the return of Jesus Christ?"

In his recent book *Implosion: Can America Recover From Its Economic and Spiritual Challenges in Time?* Rosenberg outlines several potential scenarios he believes could explain why the United States isn't mentioned in Bible prophecy: The nation—facing \$16 trillion in federal debt and \$120 trillion in total unfunded obligations—could implode economically, he hypothesizes. Perhaps the U.S. is hit by a surprise nuclear or military attack, blind-sided by a series of terrorist attacks or devastated by an unprecedented spate of natural disasters. America could suddenly lose tens of millions of people in the rapture, triggering any number of cataclysmic events. Or it could be a combination of these events.

Though it's unknown what tsunami of terror might sweep across our nation, Rosenberg's book—along with another *New York Times* best-seller, *The Harbinger: The Ancient Mystery That Holds the Secret of America's Future*—indicates a rising wave of public interest regarding America's role in the end times. These and

other end-times books, combined with the appearance of ominous signs such as record-breaking extreme weather and a historic drought, fuel a growing sense that America is in danger of judgment and near collapse. Add a recent, albeit surprising alarm sounded by famed evangelist Billy Graham and it becomes apparent this isn't just a faddish surge of end-times fascination.

"There is not only a renewed interest in end-time prophecies, but a sense that America is in decline—that the days of what has been called the American age are numbered, and if we don't change course, they are coming to an end," says Rabbi Jonathan Cahn, the author of *The Harbinger* and senior rabbi at the nation's largest messianic congregation, the Beth Israel Worship Center in Wayne, N.J.

Cahn's best-seller frames a biblical warning of national judgment in a narrative, as a man encounters "The Prophet," who claims the same nine harbingers of divine judgment that preceded the destruction of Israel 2,700 years ago are now manifesting in America. The book is based on a real-life prophetic mystery Cahn discovered in Isaiah 9 that unveils the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the "War on Terror," the economic collapse in 2008 and even public speeches by U.S. leaders as part of a modern replaying of an ancient drama involving a series of intensifying judgments.

"The absence of any clear reference to America in end-time prophecy is a warning of America's fall from its position of head of nations—the end of the American age," says Cahn, a descendant of Aaron, the high priest of the ancient Hebrews and the brother of the biblical prophet Moses. "*The Harbinger* is the filling in of that gap, what happens between now and the scenario foretold in end-time prophecy. I believe that's one of the reasons *The Harbinger* has become a best-seller throughout the nation since the first week of its release [in January 2012]. And since its release, that which it foreshadows is already coming true."

Both *The Harbinger* and *Implosion* hit the *New York Times* best-seller list this year. This marks the first time two books about Bible prophecy by different authors have simultaneously been on the list, says Jerry B. Jenkins, co-author of the 16-volume *Left Behind* series that has sold more than 65 million copies.

"We live in scary times and people are curious about the future and interested in things beyond themselves," Jenkins says. "As for the U.S. facing judgment or disaster, it seems to me we're in the middle of it. Drought, fire, floods and tornadoes—these aren't new, but they're worse than ever."

Jenkins' *Left Behind* co-author, minister Tim LaHaye, says the world is on the "verge of chaos, just as the Bible predicted in the end times" and many people are "getting ready for something catastrophic."

"There are so many signs of what the Bible outlines for the latter days, or the end times," says LaHaye, 86. "Israel is the super-sign. The Jews were scattered to almost every country in the world for 1,900 years, and in the last 100 years they have been brought back to their homeland. The whole world's focus is on this super-sign that we prophetic teachers have been talking about for 150 years, and now it's gaining momentum."

At World's End in 2012 ... or 2013

This sense of anxiety and foreboding about the future also comes amid growing interest in ancient predictions by Christians, Jews, Muslims, Native Americans and other ethnic and religious groups. Among the most highly publicized of these has been the Mayan prophecy that purportedly predicts the end of the world on Dec. 21. Though the prediction yielded the \$770 million sci-fi movie *2012* three years ago, the public's fascination with the calendar date seems to have waned, especially since Mayan scholars say new evidence shows

the Mesoamericans didn't believe the end of their long-count calendar on Dec. 21 marked the world's end.

"The scholarly community doesn't really take this too seriously," says Stephen Houston, a Mayan scholar and a professor of social science at Brown University. "It's really more of a cultural phenomenon. It's likely to be seen as important today because people are of course concerned about our present age—current conditions, environmental problems and economic dislocations."

This summer, Nouriel Roubini, a professor of economics and international business at New York University who anticipated the collapse of the U.S. housing market and the global recession, told Bloomberg TV that 2013 could be a "global perfect storm"—with policymakers running out of options to stimulate the economy and a potential war between Iran and Israel that could double gas prices, devastating the world economy.

"You could have a collapse of the Eurozone, a U.S. double-dip, hard-landing of China, hard-landing of emerging markets and a war in the Middle East," Roubini told Bloomberg TV. "Next year could be a global perfect storm."

But What About America?

With all the real-world concerns today, what some financial experts fear is the coming "greatest depression of all time" and a drought encompassing nearly two-thirds of the U.S., the public is increasingly intrigued by what the Bible may reveal about America's future.

"It creates a kind of convergence of interest in the end times," says Mark Hitchcock, pastor of Faith Bible Church in Edmond, Okla., and author of *2012, the Bible, and the End of the World* and *The Late Great United States*. "You have this Mayan prediction out there. You could have Israel and Iran at war. I see how a lot of things could really come down at the

end of the year and really cause a lot of people to wonder, 'What does the future hold for the United States?'"

Most Bible prophecy scholars agree that God's Word is mysteriously silent about the fate of the U.S. They say the Bible refers to at least 15 specific nations and regional alliances (e.g., Israel, Iran, Russia, China, Europe) that play roles in the end times. But America is not specifically named, although dozens of biblical passages refer to God's final dealings with "all the nations." In Haggai 2:7, for example, the Lord foretold through the Hebrew prophet that He would "shake all nations" in the last days.

"This is certainly coming true in the United States," Rosenberg writes in *Implosion*. "We are being shaken physically, financially, socially, spiritually, politically and in numerous other ways, and we can expect this to accelerate and intensity in the years ahead."

Evangelist Perry Stone, founder of Voice of Evangelism ministries and author of *Nightmare Along Pennsylvania Avenue* and many other books, believes—like Cahn—that Israel and America are "spiritually linked."

"America is almost a reflection of Israel," Perry says. "Israel crossed the Red Sea to get to the Promised Land. Our founders crossed the sea to get to America. Israel and America were both divided between the North and the South. Israel had 13 tribes; America had 13 colonies."

Based on those parallels, Perry says he realized the same blessings promised to ancient Israel are promised to America if the nation obeys God's Word. Likewise, the same curses Israel experienced for disobedience would also be experienced by America for not obeying God's commands.

"The very first warning God gave Israel was, 'If you disobey My Word, break My commandments and don't hearken to My Word, I will appoint over you terror,'" Perry says. "When I realized

in 2001 that there was an initiation of a 'War on Terror,' I started following those passages to see what else it indicated for America's future."

Some prophecy teachers say the Bible makes direct references to America and argue that the U.S., or perhaps New York City, is "Babylon the Great"—the "great prostitute who sits on many waters" that is destroyed in one hour, according to Revelation 17 and 18. In these chapters, the apostle John wrote that the "Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth" would be destroyed by fire, while the merchants of the earth who grew "rich through the abundance of her luxury" would "weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore" (17:5; 18:3, 11).

Others have suggested the "merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions" mentioned in Ezekiel 38:13 is a reference to the United Kingdom—whose Royal Coat of Arms includes a lion—and its offspring, America. Still others say the "great eagle" in Revelation 12:14 is America.

Rosenberg, LaHaye, Hitchcock, Perry and many other Bible prophecy teachers reject these arguments, however. And though Franklin Graham isn't typically linked with these names, the president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and international Christian relief organization Samaritan's Purse agrees the Bible doesn't specifically mention the U.S.

The logical conclusion, Graham says, is that the scenarios Rosenberg has proposed are "certainly viable." Graham is especially concerned about the nation's "moral spiral downward," noting that President Obama's support of same-sex marriage essentially amounts to "shaking his fist in God's face."

"Look at the spiritual decline of this nation and where we are today," Graham says. "Unless we repent as a nation and reverse course, I think God is going to bring quick and swift judgment

on this nation.”

The Hand of Judgment

In *Implosion*, Rosenberg, a former adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and *Forbes* magazine Publisher Steve Forbes, examines whether the nation is headed for catastrophic collapse or another Great Awakening.

“There are moments in history, and we know this from Scripture, in which God removes His hand of grace and puts His hand of judgment on a country,” says Rosenberg, who was described as a “modern-day Nostradamus” by *U.S. News and World Report* for writing a novel about a hijacked jet on a kamikaze mission into an American city nine months before the 9/11 terrorist attacks. “It’s not a pretty picture. How soon? I don’t know. But I fear it might be a lot closer than most people, even I, realize.”

In his new book, *One Nation, Under Attack: How Big-Government Liberals Are Destroying the America You Love*, the late Grant R. Jeffrey argues America is being systematically plundered by international financiers and powerful socialist forces both within the U.S. and overseas. (See “Grant Jeffrey’s Final View of America,” p. 38).

“In a very short time, the United States will be pushed to the sidelines of world events,” Jeffrey wrote. “All of this is taking place just ahead of the emergence of the prophesied Antichrist. Satan’s representative on earth will consolidate his power and establish his dictatorship, first over the revived Roman Empire and soon after that, over the entire world. And the American Empire, which rose to power with the blessing of God, will be so weak that it won’t play a notable role in the culminating events of the ‘last days.’”

Rosenberg cites several polls that reveal Americans share similar concerns about the nation’s future. A 2011 CNN poll found nearly half of all Americans fear the U.S. is heading

for another Great Depression. A 2010 Fox News poll revealed that nearly 80 percent of Americans believe the U.S. economy could collapse entirely.

This year, a worldwide Reuters News poll found that 14 percent of people believe the world will end in their lifetimes. In America, the percentage is 22 percent—the highest anywhere.

One in five Americans believes the Second Coming will occur during his or her lifetime, with 79 percent saying they believe Jesus will return to Earth someday, according to a recent Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life poll.

Meanwhile, the Rapture Index, a “Dow Jones Industrial Average of end-time activity” recorded by , hit a record high of 184 in early September. Todd Strandberg, a retired U.S. Air Force staff sergeant who founded Rapture Ready in 1987, attributes the index’s all-time high to a variety of factors: the debt crisis spreading around the world, global arm sales reaching new records, the worsening U.S. drought, rising food prices, extreme weather, record floods and a spate of “super-earthquakes.”

“It just seems like America should have imploded economically a long time ago,” Strandberg says. “It’s so odd that we can keep piling debts upon debts and why we haven’t seen the Middle East explode. It just seems God is holding things together for some event. As time goes by, we think it’s the rapture.”

Indeed, Rosenberg, Cahn, Graham, LaHaye, Hitchcock, Stone, and many other Bible prophecy teachers and faith leaders say they believe God is sending a series of escalating warnings that the nation is in growing danger of judgment unless it repents.

“I think 9/11 was a wake-up call for America,” says Anne Graham Lotz, author of *Expecting to See Jesus: A Wake-Up Call for God’s People* and the daughter of evangelist Billy Graham.

“I think Hurricane Katrina was a wake-up call. I think these record-breaking fires and some of the other things happening are warnings God is giving us, and if we don’t heed these warnings, then something more severe will happen.”

This summer, evangelist Billy Graham, who has preached to more people than any Protestant in history (2.2 billion), issued a letter calling America to repentance. In it, Graham wondered what his late wife, Ruth, would think of the country today, where “self-centered indulgence, pride and a lack of shame over sin are now emblems of the American lifestyle.”

“My heart aches for America and its deceived people,” wrote Graham, 94. “The wonderful news is that our Lord is a God of mercy, and He responds to repentance. In Jonah’s day, Nineveh was the lone world superpower—wealthy, unconcerned and self-centered. When the prophet Jonah finally traveled to Nineveh and proclaimed God’s warning, people heard and repented. I believe the same thing can happen once again, this time in our nation.”

Hope for a Turnaround

Seeking to ignite such a revival, Graham is asking millions of Christians to participate in the My Hope with Billy Graham evangelistic outreach set for Nov. 7, 2013—his 95th birthday. Graham hopes Christians will invite family, friends and neighbors to their homes to watch the “Living Room Crusade” on their TVs, tablets or smartphones. His association hopes to mobilize millions of believers to undergo training to share their faith with others during the event.

The good news, Rosenberg says, is that America has experienced two great spiritual awakenings in the past and could experience another one, based on 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God says: “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive

their sin and heal their land.”

“We desperately need a Third Great Awakening,” Rosenberg says. “We need to beg and plead with God to pour out his Holy Spirit and save us, to turn our hearts away from sin and back to our faith in Jesus Christ. If we don’t have a Third Great Awakening soon, this country will implode. I can’t say when. I can’t even say how. But I’m laying out a number of possible scenarios.”

Franklin Graham says the church has been asleep for far too long—more interested in trying to be “relevant to the culture” than teaching and preparing Christians for Jesus’ return.

“I would encourage pastors in churches to begin to preach and to prepare and to warn their congregations that God is going to judge sin,” Graham says. “We as a nation need to repent and we need the churches calling for repentance.”

*An award-winning reporter and editorial writer at the Los Angeles Daily News, The Press-Enterprise and other newspapers for two decades, **Troy Anderson** writes for Reuters, Newsmax, Charisma and many other media outlets. He lives in Irvine, Calif.*