

Survivors

By David Mckay

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BOOK ONE

- [1. Left Behind](#)
- [2. Foretold](#)
- [3. Lo, Here! and Lo, There!](#)
- [4. Searching](#)
- [5. On the Road to Montana](#)
- [6. Counting the Cost](#)
- [7. Refugees](#)
- [8. Reunion](#)

BOOK TWO

- [9. The Countdown Begin](#)
- [10. Twelve Tribes](#)
- [11. Soul Harvest](#)
- [12. The Temple](#)
- [13. The Mark](#)
- [14. Peace! Peace!](#)

BOOK THREE

- [15. Assassins?](#)
- [16. Two Witnesses](#)
- [17. Dangchao](#)
- [18. The Gospel](#)
- [19. Tribulation Force](#)
- [20. Disasters](#)
- [21. Apollyon](#)
- [22. Journey to Jerusalem](#)
- [23. The Rapture](#)

[24. New Jerusalem](#)

[25. Armageddon](#)

[Appendix A](#)

[Appendix B](#)

[Appendix C](#)

Since September 11, 2001

This book was written (and the cover design was laid out) prior to September 11, 2001. Many people have suggested that the subsequent destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York City (pictured on the cover) was fulfillment of prophecies about the destruction of "Babylon". It certainly is symbolic of the destruction of Babylon, but I believe that the real thing is yet to come.

The general thrust of that part of this book's interpretation of Bible prophecy is that tensions will develop between the United States and other forces in the United Nations. Because of an aggressive military agenda and other injustices committed by the United States, other nations of the world will eventually support an all-out military attack against the U.S. This is what we saw predicted in Bible prophecy, and it is what we see shaping up today.

Some Americans may take comfort in the fact that these aggressors against the U.S. are seen in prophecy, and in this book, to be acting as agents of the Antichrist. They will assume that it means the U.S. is correct in its stance. But, ironically, Russia, its allies, and the United Nations will (if our understanding of Bible prophecy is correct) also be acting as God's agents, inflicting a painful lesson on a country which has lost its way spiritually.

We apologise for any offence that this book may cause to people who see good in the United States. Obviously, there is good and bad in any country, and the U.S. is no exception. But we believe that true believers in any country are more concerned about loyalty to God and to His kingdom than they are about issues of patriotism, with their universal tendency to generate wars and war-mongering.

An important theme of this book (and of The Revelation) is the progressive role of Babylon (the Prostitute) throughout history. We have argued that America is the modern-day Babylon.

The authors of the Left Behind series felt it necessary to physically move the final world government to Iraq (the geographical site of the original Babylon) in order to make it clear that it was a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Ironically, the U.S. has now firmly established its control and claim over that part of the world... leaving no doubt that, by whatever criteria one wishes to use, the U.S. still comes up as the modern-day equivalent of Babylon... the Prostitute.

Of course much of this book is conjecture, and the fall of America is only a small part of a much bigger story contained within Bible prophecy. The overall lessons of The Revelation are that no country can take the place of God's invisible kingdom of faith, peace, and love, and that the Lamb's example of laying

down his life for others will eventually prove more powerful than all of the armies of the world.

Remember that as you observe world events unfold.

From Zion Ben-Jonah

My real name is not Zion Ben-Jonah, and the characters in this book are not real people. In fact, the whole story is fiction. Much of what it conveys is total conjecture.

Zion Ben-Jonah is inspired by a character in a series of books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. In that series, a character named Tsion Ben-Judah sets the world straight at a time when the mass media is monopolised by materialistic forces that seek to distort the truth.

We believe that this is already the situation in the world of religious entertainment. In order for a book to sell in a really big way, certain important truths (truths which are uncomfortable, and hard for the masses to accept) must be left out.

In the tradition of LaHaye's Tsion Ben-Judah, we will include those truths in this account of what we believe is coming to pass shortly, in America and elsewhere around the world.

Almost certainly some of what it predicts will not happen exactly as it is described in this book. This book is not meant to be taken as a prophecy in itself. But it is an attempt to apply the prophecies of the Bible to modern day events. A discerning reader will need to determine what is factual and what is not, as the actual events unfold in the years ahead.

Discovering the whole truth often involves knowing and admitting the limits of our understanding. We are each trapped within the boundaries of our own experience and imagination. No one has total knowledge of all truth except God himself. There will, I believe, be truth in this book which you have never read elsewhere. It is my firm conviction that I have been inspired by God as I have written it. But I (or anyone else) can be inspired in what I (or they) say, without being infallible. If you keep that in mind, you will be able to maintain better perspective as you read through what I have written.

On the other hand, I have a responsibility (as does every other Christian) not to deliberately distort truth for selfish motives. I could (as others have done) make millions of dollars by altering the facts in order to give the public what they want to hear. This book will not do that.

Instead, it will try to tell you what you need to know in order to be prepared for what is almost certainly going to happen on earth in the next few years, whether what it says sells or not. I have done it in story form, but I have also tried to be true to what the Bible actually says about the future, whether it conforms with popular opinion or not. These issues are too serious for anyone to take a chance on leading people astray just to make a few more dollars.

Notes appear at the end of each chapter to help you understand points made in that chapter. Those notes are my comments on the biblical implications of that part of the story.

--David McKay

BOOK ONE

1. Left Behind

Everyone was caught off guard when the trouble began. But no one was more unprepared than those who supposedly knew ahead of time what was to happen.

Rayford Strait was not a believer, so he never expected any of this -- not in his lifetime, nor in anyone else's lifetime. But he was a realist. If circumstances changed (as they had as a result of the attack), then he would simply make the necessary adjustments and set about doing what needed to be done. Which is more or less what he did.

His wife and son, on the other hand, were believers. Irene Strait attended church faithfully, not far from where they lived, in Prospect Heights, Illinois. Vernon Billings, Irene's pastor at New Hope Chapel, often taught about the troubles that were going to come on the earth. He had a shelf full of books and even video tapes detailing what to expect. The topic had become something of an obsession with him.

Irene knew from what she had heard at New Hope Chapel, that a popular world leader was going to arise who would gain control over the entire planet. She had heard that he would persecute believers on a scale never before known. She knew that there would be death and destruction everywhere, and that her own country would not be spared.

Irene had shared much of this with her 13 year old son, Raymie. She tried to share it with her 19-year-old daughter, Chloe, too, but Chloe was -- like her father -- a cynic. She had little interest in anything she could not see and touch.

Raymie found the books, the lectures, and especially the videos exciting. They were scary at times, but he took comfort in the fact that he would never have to go through what they were describing, because he would be whisked up to heaven before it all started... instantly and painlessly... and all because he had said a little prayer asking Jesus into his heart. Raymie faithfully prayed for his father and his sister, that they too would say the prayer before it was too late. If only they would, then they could all go to heaven together.

Irene prayed the same prayer that Raymie prayed, and she prayed it even more faithfully and more fervently than Raymie did. She did not want any member of her family to be left behind. But she never for a moment thought that she or Raymie would be among those who would be left. She had books and

tapes and videos and a long list of religious experts to back her up in her belief that she, and others like her, would be spared.

All of the suffering, she had been told, was reserved for someone else, for someone more appropriately suited to suffering... like the Jews. After all, they have had more practice than the rest of us when it comes to suffering!

Rayford Strait was piloting an early morning flight from London to Chicago on a Tuesday in May when the invasion began. He had left London at 5am and was about halfway to Chicago when he received word from Civil Aviation authorities in Chicago that unauthorised traffic had been picked up on radar in Canada, and it was crossing his proposed flight path. (It was about 3:30am in Chicago by that time.)

At first Rayford had been asked to divert to another corridor, but while they were still communicating the details, another message came through as an all frequencies broadcast. A distraught flight controller was ordering all aircraft passing over the Ice Cap to turn back immediately.

When Rayford asked for an explanation, all he received was a shouted warning: "All flights headed for North America over the Arctic Circle must turn back immediately. This is a matter of extreme urgency. It has come from the American Civil Defence headquarters in Washington, D.C. I repeat: Turn back! Do not attempt to land in North America!"

Unidentified aircraft had come like a swarm of bees from the north, over the Ice Cap and across Canada. With them had come missiles... hundreds (if not thousands) of them, flying high above the aircraft and coming down to earth just moments before the bombers crossed into U.S. airspace. Each missile had been programmed to hit a particular U.S. city or a strategic military target. Some were intercepted, of course, but on the whole the highly sophisticated American missile defence system had proved to be helpless in the face of so much fire-power and with so little warning.

The enemy missiles were each surrounded by a cluster of metallic balloons, which served to confuse tracking devices on the American anti-missile missiles. Nine out of ten of America's defence weapons totally missed their marks. And while American missiles were busily tracking other missiles, many of the enemy planes were able to sneak safely into U.S. airspace as well. What the missile invasion did not destroy, the enemy bombers took care of.

Although the general public had been conned into believing that America had an effective defence against an attack like this, military intelligence in almost every other country of the world knew better. But they also knew that nothing could stop America from pressing the button and sending its entire arsenal out to do the same thing to any other country that would dare to attack the U.S. By doing this, the United States could at least wipe their opponents out as they themselves were going down. This threat of "mutually assured destruction" (MAD, as it was called, for short) and not the highly touted missile defence system, had been the one thing that had kept the peace for as long as it had.

But now that the threat of nuclear attack had become a reality, the American system found itself either too unwieldy, too timid, or perhaps too sane to do to an enemy nation what was being done to itself. Someone in charge of

pushing the button apparently realised, too late, that such a move would be pointless. It would not bring back to life the millions of Americans who died that night, and it would only double the suffering for the human race.

In Prospect Heights, Illinois, where Rayford Strait's family was sleeping, the air raid sirens went off several minutes before the first missiles hit, at 4am on Tuesday. But people had grown complacent about such things, ever since the Cold War had ended, and especially since communism had suffered such total defeat in the 1990's. The U.S. fallout shelter program was totally scrapped in 1992, and air raid drills were widely regarded as unnecessary, especially when they chose to go off in the middle of the night.

People in Prospect Heights, like people throughout the rest of the country, mostly rolled over in their beds, and either slept through the first impact or else never knew what hit them.

But Irene Strait was not like everyone else. She lived by the book, and if there was to be an air raid drill, then she would do the right thing by her country. She roused her family and they all trundled down to the basement, despite protests from both Chloe and Raymie.

On their way, Raymie grabbed what he thought was his latest hand-held video game lying on the kitchen counter. If he was going to be locked in the cellar for a while, he may as well have something to play with.

When they reached the basement, Irene turned on the transistor radio that she always kept there. She quickly picked up the special Civil Defence broadcast.

It was just dawning on the trio who sat huddled around the radio, that this was not a drill, when they heard and saw the first explosion. Downtown Chicago was some twenty miles south of them. When the first nuclear warhead hit it, they not only heard the explosion, but they also felt the rumble in the ground. The darkened basement lit up from the flash coming through two small street-level windows. The windows themselves shook from the shock waves. A short while later, they heard several smaller explosions, with at least one of them coming from O'Hare International Airport, just six miles away, where a bomber had dropped a smaller bomb to destroy the runways.

The Strait family did not know it at the time, but one of those explosions came from a one megaton warhead that veered off course and landed between De Kalb and Dixon, some eighty miles west of them. It had been intended for a target just north of Prospect Heights. If it had landed as planned, their house would almost certainly have been destroyed, and if they had survived the blast, they would have been so badly burned from radiation that they would not have lived for more than a few days.

While they sat relatively safely in their basement, literally millions of Americans were being incinerated. Millions more were receiving burns and other injuries from which they would never recover.

"What's happening?" Irene said to herself in bewilderment, as she ran her hands through her hair.

"Are we being bombed?" asked Raymie. "It can't be the end of the world," he added, as if trying to reassure himself. "It can't be; we're s'posed ta be gone before that happens. It's not the end, is it, Mom?"

"I don't know, Raymie," Irene responded, with exasperation showing in her voice. "I've got to think."

"Quiet, you two," said Chloe, who had her ear pressed up against the radio. "They're saying that Russia has launched an attack. The missiles are from Russia. They say our defence system will stop the bombs before they reach their targets."

"Yeah, tell that to whoever just copped that last one!" said Raymie. "Bet it hit Chicago! Now we're gonna die too. We're gonna die; and what's God doing about it? He isn't doing anything, is he? Why, Mom? Why?" Raymie's voice was becoming more hysterical as the seriousness of the situation dawned on him.

"Settle down, Raymie! We need to pray," said Irene.

"Yeah, sure! We need to pray," he almost whispered sarcastically to himself. "We already did pray, and it was s'posed ta make us safe from all of this. I should be in heaven right now." He turned to Irene. "What went wrong, Mom? Why didn't we go? We're just as good as the others. How come they got raptured and we didn't?"

"We don't know that they did get raptured," said Raymie's mother. "Maybe the rapture hasn't happened yet."

"Well, what's the point, if we're still gonna hafta go through this?"

Chloe interrupted again. "Will both of you shut up? We're lucky to be alive right now. But it's not over yet. We need to act quickly."

Just then, the cellar lights went out.

"There should be some candles in that cupboard over the workbench," said Irene. "At least that's where we used to keep them."

Chloe felt her way over to the bench and opened the door on the overhanging cupboard. Not only were there candles, but there were matches too. She silently prayed that they would still light, and after a couple of strikes they had a reassuring flame perched on the workbench.

She turned to her younger brother. "Raymie, turn the faucet on and fill up the laundry tub with water. Quickly!" Chloe, like her father, was the pragmatist. She could see that decisions needed to be made, and she was making them. Her urgency jerked Raymie out of his wailing complaints, at least for a while.

"Mom, stay by the radio and see if they tell us anything more," Chloe said, and then addressed herself: "I need to find a way to cover those two windows as quickly as possible. There's a lot of radiation up there, and it's going to be around for quite a while."

Chloe found a hammer and some nails on an old work bench. She pulled boards off an orange crate and tacked them up in front of the two under-sized windows high up on the wall. There was still some coal in the corner of the old coal bin, and she stuffed as much of that as she could between the glass and the timber slats, in the hope that the coal would soak up some of the radiation. By

the time she finished, she was covered with soot. But there was no time for cleaning up.

"Raymie, what's happening with the water?" she asked.

"I filled the laundry tub and a bucket. There's nothing else to put it in."

"What about empty paint cans? Tip the paint out somewhere if you have to. We need to fill every available container, no matter how dirty it is."

Raymie went back to work looking for containers and muttering to himself about how no one would ever catch him drinking water from a dirty old paint can. "The paint's probably worse for me than not having any water at all," he said.

"There're only a couple dozen candles, and two boxes of matches," Chloe said, loudly enough for the others to hear. "We need to ration the candles and the water."

"What're we gonna eat?" asked Raymie.

"Nothing... at least not for a while. It's too dangerous to go upstairs. In a few days we may be able to make a quick trip to the fridge and grab something."

"In a few days?" wailed Raymie, who had tipped nails and screws out of some empty cans and was filling the cans with water.

"Yes, in a few days. It won't kill us."

Irene was not listening. She was fervently praying that God would do something to bring meaning to all of this. She prayed that he would protect them, that Rayford would be safe, and that she would be able to contact Pastor Billings. That was when she saw the cell phone.

Raymie had accidentally grabbed it, thinking it was a hand-held video game. She picked it up and started dialling. She thanked God that they had paid extra for the microwave satellite function. The Billingses had a satellite phone too. Hopefully she would be able to get a call through to them.

"Pastor Billings! Is that you?," she said when Vernon Billings picked up the receiver on his end of the line. "This is Irene Strait. What's happening? Please tell me!"

"Trust God, Sister Strait," said the kindly old pastor. "Everything's gonna be all right. He knows what he's doing."

"But the country... it's being bombed!" said Irene. "This isn't how it was supposed to happen. We were supposed to be raptured. Is this the end of the world or what?"

"Believe me, Sister. It's all under control", replied Pastor Billings. "I was on the phone to a Christian militia movement in Montana just last night. They said the Lord has actually appeared to them out there. Yes, really! It's not quite how we expected it to happen, but we have to flow with the Spirit, Sister. God is calling his people from all over America to make their way to Montana. I refused to believe it myself; but that was last night. Now I'm thinking differently."

There was silence on Irene's end of the phone as the pastor paused to let her respond. "Are you with me, Sister Strait?" he asked.

"Uh, yeah, sure. I'm with you," Irene replied hesitantly.

Pastor Billings continued. "We may escape this thing yet, Sister. But you'll have to be obedient. Elaine and I are praying about it now, and we want

you to do the same. The Lord has spared us for a purpose. He's coming for us, Irene, you can be sure of that. We just had a few of the details wrong."

"A few of the details?!" said Chloe, when Irene recounted her conversation a minute or two later. "The destruction of America is one hell of a big detail!"

"Watch your language," Irene cautioned. She should have known from past experience that such a warning would not stop her strong-willed daughter. Even bothering to make such a correction was out of character for Irene, who tended to let her children do what they liked.

"I'm sorry, Chloe," Irene said quickly. "It's all the pressure." And then she looked at her daughter in the light of the candle, with soot all over her face, and she longed once again for her to accept Jesus. Tears began to flow as she spoke, "This may be your last chance, honey. Wouldn't you like to get right with the Lord now, so that you can go with us?"

"I'm not going with anyone until I'm sure that it's safe out there," said Chloe. And then she added, "You aren't seriously thinking of going with him, are you? You'll get yourself killed!"

"What else are we supposed to do?" asked Raymie. "Just sit here and starve to death?"

Chloe shared her brother's frustration, but she did not let on. "What we need to do is sit here and listen to the radio. Civil Defence knows what's best. They said radiation is at its worst for the first 24 hours after the explosion. It could be suicidal to go out there now. Someone may come and rescue us. Or they may decide that it's safe for us to come out after a while. We just have to keep our heads and not panic. What they're saying now is for people to find shelter and wait."

Just then the phone rang. Irene picked it up. It was Rayford.

"Irene, I'm sorry to bother you at such an odd hour. I was worrying about you."

"Oh Rayford! It's awful! Chicago has been bombed, and some other cities too... No, seriously! It's on the radio... We're not hurt, just hiding in the basement... Are you okay? ... When will you be home? ... London? Why London? ... But you will be back tonight, won't you? ... Oh, this is awful! Just awful! ... Yes, I understand. ... I'll try. Do you have any idea how long you might be? ... I can't hear you. Your voice is breaking up... Oh dear, I've lost him."

Pan Continental, the airlines for which Rayford flew, had been the first to experiment with microwave satellite equipment on transatlantic flights. It was only good for a short, specified distance on each flight, but it meant that pilots had one more window through which to receive important information on long, lonely flights. Rayford had obviously used some of his precious satellite time to contact Irene.

Irene turned to the children. "Daddy couldn't land because of the bombs. He's on his way back to London. At least he's safe, and he knows we are too."

Zion Ben-Jonah Writes:

There is disagreement over whether Christians will be taken to heaven before the Great Tribulation, or after. Both sides agree: (1) That the seven 'trumpets' in chapters 8-10 of The Revelation refer to events that take place during the period called "The Great Tribulation"; and (2) That I Corinthians 15:51-52 is talking about what is called the "Rapture" -- when Christians will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air at his return. We need to study these passages to find the answer to the question about which comes first.

I Corinthians 15:51 says that the Rapture will take place "at the sounding of the last trumpet". So when would that be? Before or after the seven trumpets of the Tribulation? Easy, isn't it?

Jesus himself says that "immediately after the tribulation of those days", God will send his angels to gather together those who believe in him, so that they can meet him as he returns to earth. (Matthew 24:29-31)

Teaching that Christians do not have to go through the Tribulation is popular, because it is what people want so badly to hear. But it is not supported by scripture. It is a false hope.

The real question in this debate is this: "What are the comparative risks involved in each approach?" Anyone bracing for the worst would not have a problem if proved wrong. But someone looking for an early escape would be in great despair if their theory proved unreliable.

[\(Table of Contents\)](#)

2. Foretold

The control towers were in chaos, both at Gatwick and at Heathrow... in fact, all over Europe, as they tried to deal with so many returning flights. On his headphones in the cockpit of the big 747, Rayford Strait had been able to pick up something about a charter flight missing off the coast of Scotland. It had run out of fuel while trying to get back to England. There was no telling what had become of the many flights which would not have had enough fuel to make it back to Europe. They would have been forced to put down somewhere in North America, with or without airport runways. There must have been dozens of crashes.

When Rayford had landed and walked into the airport, he started to get a clearer picture of the enormity of the problem. Amidst the pandemonium of flight cancellations and unscheduled arrivals, the airport was abuzz with talk about a huge pre-emptive military strike against the United States, by Russia. It was 2pm in London, but only 8am in Chicago. The sun had not even come up on the West Coast of America yet, and it would be a few hours before any video coverage would be available, but every news station in the world was interrupting its normal programming to give sketchy first reports of the disaster.

Early estimates put the deaths at five million. Later reports would verify that the loss in human life was already several times that figure, and it would almost double over the next few weeks.

Damage to cities, highways, and airports meant that reconstruction was out of the question... even if there had been no nuclear fallout to worry about. The entire country was without government, without power, without communication, and without vital transportation links. The central business district of nearly a hundred major American cities had been entirely wiped out. If the attack had not come in the middle of the night, the loss in human lives would have been several times higher.

Hospitals in the inner cities had been destroyed, and along with them had gone their entire on-duty medical staffs. What medical and rescue services were still available had to function almost without administration, and that was assuming that the rescue personnel themselves were still alive and able to work. America was suddenly back in the middle ages; everyone was being forced to fend for themselves to survive.

Emergency services throughout the English-speaking world were quick to start marshalling forces to airlift rescue supplies, protective clothing, and medical personnel to America, Mexico, and Canada. The wounded would need to be treated as quickly as possible, although for many hundreds of thousands, even treatment would not save them. Those who were already dead would most likely be left where they were.

There were mixed feelings from the non-English-speaking world. Everyone was, of course, shocked. But U.S. President Gerald Fitzhugh had made many enemies with his growing military involvement in world affairs. He had conducted numerous wars of 'liberation', supposedly aimed at wiping out 'terrorism'. His closest aides swore that he genuinely believed he was doing God's will. They said that he experienced personal pain at the civilian casualties that he had caused, but that he felt it was necessary in order to create a kind of holy world peace.

Xu Dangchao, from Tibet, had been elected Secretary General of the United Nations one year earlier, two years after Tibet had been admitted to the world body, and three years after the U.N. headquarters had been shifted to Geneva. Although Dangchao's policies were wildly popular with Russia and with the Third World, his hands had been tied because of America's veto power in the U.N. Security Council. Dangchao wanted to erase the Third World debt and to do away with prejudicial import/export duties, which had the effect of favouring rich nations and further crippling the poorer ones. America's weak justification for opposing the scheme was just that Dangchao was trying to do "too much too soon".

Russia and China, who strongly backed Dangchao, were as stubborn as America about vetoing American proposals for military intervention in countries where the U.S. believed human rights were being abused. But the U.S. had ways of working around a veto from either Russia or China. It used its wealth and military might to form military alliances, with which it could wage wars on its own.

Sadly, President Fitzhugh found that the more he had played God with the future of countries he saw as being "evil", the easier it had become to justify interference even when atrocities committed by the side he was helping were worse than those by the ones he was committing America to destroy.

Of course the American public had lapped it all up. The important thing, politically, was that Fitzhugh had not lost a single skirmish while he had been in office. As long as he was careful to target small revolutionary movements and relatively weak countries, and then to hit them hard, he was almost guaranteed success. Troops would no sooner return triumphant from one conflict than he would be sending out more to settle another. Americans were more proud than ever to be Americans. They truly saw themselves as the saviours of the world. And President Fitzhugh, with his claim to being "born again", never missed an opportunity to remind voters that God was on his side.

But now, with America in the throes of death, Russia, China, and their hero, Dangchao, had nothing to fear either from Fitzhugh, or from Britain or France -- the other two permanent members of the Security Council. (France had been distancing itself from the U.S. anyway.) It appeared that all three of the dissenting nations had been subdued in the space of just a few hours!

* * *

Rayford was told to get some sleep, but to stay in touch with the airport, so that he could be called in if his plane was needed for a mercy mission. All commercial flights to the U.S. had been cancelled. The British government had already declared a state of emergency. This meant that the British military would take command of all local airlines and all local airline pilots. Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and many European nations were making similar moves to assist. Supplies urgently needed to be flown to North America, and refugees needed to be flown out. The entire population of the U.S. was about to be evacuated ... at least what remained of it.

There had been no reports of damage in Canada, apart from a couple of hits in unpopulated regions, and these were apparently caused by defective missiles. It seemed that Russia's war had been only with the U.S., not with Canada.

England, Australia, and other countries that were sympathetic with America, had also escaped without a hint of attack. So airports in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec, and Vancouver were being geared up for round-the-clock arrivals and departures. Rayford, along with all other available pilots, would be playing an important part in the rescue operation.

Although he was tired from the trip, there was too much happening for Rayford to sleep straight away. He checked into the Airport Hilton, then laid on the bed fully clothed. He stared at the ceiling in the same state of shock that so much of the world was in at that very moment. He thought about Irene, about Chloe, and about Raymie. His concerns turned only briefly to other relatives in the U.S. who may have been hit.

Telephone communication with the U.S. was virtually impossible because so many lines had been knocked out. Even satellite phones were being affected by the fallout. Fortunately, Rayford had bought Irene a microwave satphone, so that he could call her from the cockpit when passing through the relatively narrow band on the Pan-Con route from London to Chicago. That would now be his main link with her. He would probably be able to give her another call on his flight back to Canada.

Images of how it must have been for the millions who had already died haunted Rayford. His thoughts returned to Irene and the kids down in the basement. There was comfort in knowing that they, at least, were still alive. With any luck, he would be talking to them within the next 24 hours. He silently thanked God for that. In time, he hoped to be able to find a way to get rescuers to the house, so they could take his family to safety.

Late that afternoon, after a few hours of fitful sleep, Rayford awoke, showered, then left word at the hotel desk that he was taking a cab to the airport. He figured airline officials could tell him more about what was happening than he would be able to learn from any other news source.

A visit to the airline offices above the departure lounge revealed that Rayford had been assigned to fly out at six the next morning, on a flight to Toronto. There would be only a few passengers (mostly doctors and nurses), but the plane would also carry tents, medical supplies, food, and radiation-proof clothing. They were already being loaded in a special hangar at the south end of the airport.

Rayford further learned that, when word had begun to spread, only hours after the bombing had stopped, that Canada had not been hit, this had started a mass northern exodus from the United States. The northern highways were already packed with people fleeing the scene. Canadian authorities were frantically trying to set up refugee camps to contain them.

Fortunately it was nearly summer, so thousands of people were quickly accommodated outside, near Canada's border with the U.S. This left churches and school auditoriums free to be turned into hospitals for the wounded. Helicopters and land rescue vehicles started almost immediately to ferry the wounded out of the northern states; but even then they were only able to service a few of the worst-hit cities. Vancouver was caring for the wounded from Seattle, Portland, and Spokane; Toronto was taking survivors from Detroit, Cleveland, and Buffalo; and Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec were doing what they could to help refugees from the area that included Boston, Rochester, Philadelphia, and New York City.

At the same time, Canadians themselves were panicking about the fallout that was headed their way. Airports in all of the major cities were packed with passengers waiting for stand-by seats out of the country. Hundreds of flights which would have normally been destined for the U.S. were quickly rerouted to Canada, where airlines could be guaranteed to fill every seat, regardless of what they charged or where their destination was to be. Officials from Emergency Preparedness Canada were frantically trying to set up priority criteria for determining who should be allowed to take the first flights out of the country.

A TV in the Heathrow VIP lounge updated viewers on how many U.S. cities and airports had been demolished. Aircraft were still able to come and go from some smaller airstrips. But that would not be enough to meet the far more urgent needs of the larger cities -- cities like Chicago -- which were the ones that had suffered the greatest losses. Milwaukee and St. Paul/Minneapolis, both closer to Canada than Chicago, were on their own in providing transport to the refugee camps being set up by their northern neighbours.

President Gerald Fitzhugh and his family were believed to be trapped beneath the capital building in Washington, D.C., where they had been rushed to shelter as soon as the alert went up. If a bomb had landed close enough to bring down the White House (which appeared to be the case), then escape for those beneath it would not be easy.

People who had survived the bombing were being told via radio broadcasts to seek shelter and to await further instructions. There would be attempts to relocate them to places away from the fallout; but first the authorities needed to establish exactly where that might be. Weather reports before the attack showed a cold front moving southeast across the Midwest. The fallout cloud would, therefore, be likely to move in that direction. However this was only good news for people on the American West Coast, because for every cloud moving away from other localities, there was another coming toward them from the west.

With nuclear strikes in San Diego, Anaheim, L.A., Fresno, Sacramento, Oakland, San Francisco, Portland, Eugene, Tacoma, Seattle, and Spokane, states on the West Coast were amongst the most heavily hit anyway. Only the area between Boston and Washington had been more heavily hit.

Rayford could see from the first film footage of refugees heading for Canada, that he and his family would not have much chance of reunion through that route. Both sides of the freeways were being used for northbound traffic, which was at a standstill in places and only creeping along in others. Traffic had to detour around major cities and other badly damaged roads. Against such a flow of traffic, only emergency vehicles had any hope of travelling south.

The freeways themselves were becoming increasingly blocked by vehicles without fuel, which had to be pushed to the side of the road and deserted. That left the drivers and passengers of those vehicles to venture forward on foot. Days out on the road would mean days more exposed to the deadly fallout. Civil Defence warned against trying to escape before it could be established that there was someplace safe to go. But millions took no heed.

Chicago was too far away from Toronto to attract Toronto's limited rescue resources. But some local authorities in the Chicago area were commandeering aircraft, vehicles, and even ships to ferry survivors north. Everyone working on rescue operations was putting themselves at risk, and protective clothing was urgently required.

Rayford took some consolation in knowing that, even if he could not get to his own family, he would be helping the overall rescue effort. In time, his involvement might give him the opening that he needed to help Irene and the kids as well.

At about 7pm, Rayford left the VIP lounge and headed for the cab rank. He had learned as much as he could, and now it was time to get a few more hours of sleep before his departure. On the way out of the airport lobby, he was approached by a slim, blond man, in his thirties. The shabbily dressed man stuck a booklet in Rayford's face and asked in a broad German accent if he wanted to read it. "The Fall of America" was the title. It appeared above a picture of an upside-down American flag. Rayford pushed the man aside in disgust.

"Always someone ready to cash in on the sufferings of others"! he thought to himself. But just as he walked out the door of the airport, it hit him: The attack had only taken place a few hours ago! How could someone in England already have produced a booklet telling about it? He raced back into the airport, his eyes searching in every direction for the man. The little German was near the Pan-Con ticket counter, talking to two or three other people, who also appeared to be sending him away.

"Where did you get that? Who wrote it?" Rayford whispered almost at the level of a shout, when he had caught the man's attention by grabbing his arm. He was trying hard not to create a scene, and yet he was desperate to know what was going on.

"Some friends... together, vee wrote it," the man replied, half in fear. "You are interested?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm interested!" said Rayford emphatically. "Very interested. But first tell me how you knew it was going to happen."

"Vee study Bible prophecy," said the softly-spoken little man. "And vee pray. Vee have been saying zat zis would happen. Vee have been saying it for few years now. It is most imperative zat you read zis book." His brow was wrinkled in an almost exaggerated show of seriousness. But then, how could anyone possibly exaggerate the seriousness of what had just happened in America?

The young German went on dramatically: "Udder sings are coming too... Ferry serious sings."

Rayford wanted to read the book; but he also wanted some instant answers. He offered the man -- Reinhard was his name -- a meal, if he would sit down and talk to him.

"It is most important zat I get zese books to zuh people," replied Reinhard. "Vee can talk later."

"Please!" Rayford begged, almost in tears now. "I'll be flying to Canada tonight. My family is over there. I must know what is going on before I leave."

Reinhard sensed an urgency in Rayford's voice that he must not have found in his other clients, because he quickly backed down. "Vere do you vant to talk?" he asked.

Rayford took him to a table in the nearest restaurant, ordered a meal for them both and then opened the floor for Reinhard to explain what was going on.

"Vat is happening now... it is yudgement from God on America. But it is also opening for Russia to control zee United Nations. Dangchao is Russia's man, you understand?" Rayford knew of the growing unrest throughout the world

at what many countries considered was America's abuse of power within the U.N. That much of Reinhard's explanation made sense, but it was not what he was looking for.

"Are you telling me that you knew this was going to happen just from reading the Bible?" he asked incredulously.

"I cannot show all vat you vish to know in such short time. You vill read it in zuh book."

In his clipped German manner, Reinhard's promise sounded more like a command. "You vill see for yourself. For now, vee have little time. I must move quickly. Zuh Bible tells of five vorld powers. Zay are a bear, an eagle, a lion, a leopard, and a rooster. Zese are signs for Russia, America, England, Africa, and France." He counted them off on his fingers. "You must know, zee leopard is being now used as sign of solidarity for zuh Sird Vorld."

Rayford was finding it difficult to follow, but he decided to let Reinhard carry on.

"England, France, and America can veto plans by Russia and China in zee United Nations. Zee udder ten Security Council members... zay are called rotating members... Zay come from zee udder countries."

"So?" said Rayford, who was showing only mild interest at this stage. He had other questions that he wanted to ask, but he would wait a bit longer.

Reinhard went on. "Zee eagle's vings are plucked. You vill see it in the book. It is in the Bible. Zis bombing, it is zee plucking of zee eagle's vings. After falls zee eagle, zuh lion... zat is, England... loses its power. Zuh rooster vings, zay join vit zuh leopard. Zat is France and all of Europe joining vit zuh Sird Vorld. You see, it is because zuh bear... Russia... subdues... Zat is to say she stops Sree vorld powers from fighting against her. She does it by plucking zuh vings of zee eagle. Vit help from zee udder ten nations zuh new leader vill control zuh vorld."

Rayford was losing patience. "I'm not interested in all the political stuff," he said. "Do you have any answers? My family is over there. If you really know what is going on, what can I do for them? What should I do?"

"It is God's punishment," Reinhard said soberly. "If your people are alive, zay vill be forced to leave. No one vill live zair ever again. God ist angry vit zuh shurch people in America."

"The church people?" Rayford said with genuine surprise. "Why the church people?" He was thinking of Irene.

"Zay fight zuh teachings of sheesus. Zay do not prepare for vat is coming, and day do not tell the truth to udders."

"My wife is a church person," Rayford responded indignantly. "She was always talking about this... this... something called 'The Great Tribulation'."

"No, no! Zis is not Great Tribulation... not yet," said Reinhard. "Zis is only zuh start of vat is coming. But your vife, she needs faith vat is strong enough to go through zuh Great Tribulation. I do not sink she vill find it in zuh shurches."

"She doesn't need to go through it... least not the way she tells it," Rayford replied. He was surprised to hear himself defending something he had always scoffed at. "She says that she will be taken to heaven before it happens."

"And did she tell you zat America vas going to be punished before she goes to heffen?" Reinhard asked quietly, as he stared at his lap. When Rayford did not answer immediately, Reinhard raised his head, and then his blond eyebrows in further anticipation.

Rayford finally spoke. "Well, I don't know. I don't recall her saying anything about that." Even as he spoke, he was thinking about how emotional Irene had been on the phone. "Maybe she missed that part."

"She vill need help ... spiritual help," Reinhard said sympathetically. He went on slowly, as though talking to himself: "It is so ferry hard for the shurch people... Zay cannot say ven zay are wrong." Then he looked Rayford directly in the eyes, and spoke slowly and deliberately, his own eyes opening wide as he spoke. "You must not let her run away. She vill vant to run off and find her Sheesus."

Rayford did not like hearing his wife talked about in such a way at a time when he was so close to losing her. He would take the time to study Reinhard's book more closely later, but he was not getting any information from this strange little man that would help him in his present situation. So he excused himself and left Reinhard to finish his meal alone.

Rayford wondered as he glanced back at the skinny little street preacher wolfing the last of the food down, just how long it had been since Reinhard's last meal.

Zion Ben-Jonah Writes:

Predictions about the fall of America are mostly based on Daniel 7:1-7 and Revelation 13:1-2. Daniel's prophecy is usually assumed to be about the original Babylonian Empire (represented by a Lion with Eagle wings), the Persian Empire (represented by a Bear), the Greek Empire (represented by a Leopard with four chicken wings), and the Roman Empire (represented by a horrible 'Beast' that devours the whole earth). And yet these same symbols apply to four of the five members of the U.N. Security Council. (The symbol for the fifth member, China, is a Dragon.) Only the Leopard (or Panther) is not a prominent national symbol today, except as a symbol for Africa, militant Blacks, or, perhaps, the Third World.

In Revelation 13:2, a future world power is described which has attributes of all the animals listed in Daniel 7, except the Eagle. The Eagle, apparently, no longer exists at that time!

There are ten rotating members of the U.N. Security Council, taken from the rest of the world. The Bible says that with the help of ten "kings" a resurrected world power will destroy another world power described as a Prostitute... who rules over world trade. (Revelation 17:1-5, 12-16) And her name is "Babylon".

The Encyclopedia Britannica lists only one city in the modern world which is named "Babylon". It is located on Long Island, in New York City, not far from the New York Stock Exchange!

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