

The
Acts
of the Apostles



WHEN WE PARTICIPATE
IN GOD'S WORK,
WE REAP RESULTS FAR
BEYOND OUR
EXPECTATIONS

ACTS 9:26-43

INTRODUCTION

- Saul returns to Jerusalem and is met with skepticism.
- Luke spends some time describing two new examples of God's miraculous work through the ongoing ministry of Jesus' disciples.
- He focuses on the work of Peter, who introduces two people to the healing power of God, leading cities to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

**GOD BRINGS GREAT
RESULTS FROM
SURPRISE ENCOUNTERS**

ACTS 9:26-31

JERUSALEM

- Saul returns to Jerusalem, where he tries to join in fellowship with the other Christians in the city.
- In verse 26, Luke records their reasonable response of doubt and fear, suspicious that their former persecutor has actually had a change in heart.
- It is not just the Jews who have a hard time believing the spiritual reversal in Saul's life.

JERUSALEM

- The early church also has trouble understanding how God could call someone so hateful and violent and use him as a witness for the Gospel.
- But in verse 27, one disciple, Barnabas, steps out in faith and confirms Saul's new mission
- Saul joins the missionary efforts of the Jerusalem church, preaching unashamedly in public and debating the Greek-speaking Jews (verses 28–29).

JERUSALEM

- We see in verse 29 that the Jews have the same response to Saul as they did to the other apostles (Acts 5) and Stephen (Acts 6–7).
- His former ties to the Jewish religious society count as nothing now that Saul is living for Christ.
- Saul will go on to write in one of his epistles that he “counts everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8).

THE CHURCH

- The work God began in Saul's heart has already begun to overflow into his life as he forsakes his old agenda and takes up God's mission instead.
- In verse 30, Paul leaves for Tarsus with the help of the other believers.
- Luke concludes this portion of Acts with the discerning observation that, in all the regions where persecution scattered the Christians, God's people are now growing in number.

**GOD'S ACTS OF
DELIVERANCE HAVE
FAR-REACHING
EFFECTS**

ACTS 9:32-35

PETER

- Peter continues to obey his calling as a minister of the Gospel (Luke 24:44–49).
- He and other disciples have experienced incredible results thus far: from imprisonment (Acts 4), to the Holy Spirit's judgment (Acts 5), to fiery revival meetings (Acts 2) and miraculous healing (Acts 3).
- Everywhere the disciples go, God uses their words and actions to make His power known to the crowds in attendance.

PETER

- Peter's travels lead him to the city of Lydda, where he encounters a man named Aeneas who is in desperate need of healing (verse 33).
- Bedridden for eight years, Aeneas is well-known to the residents in Lydda and the Sharon region.
- Peter speaks to him in the authority of Jesus' name, as he has done in the past (Acts 3:6), and Aeneas immediately gets up (verse 34).

PETER

- The effects of this healing miracle do not just touch Aeneas' life. His healing becomes a testimony of Christ's power that is made known to all the residents of his town and the surrounding area.
- As a result, numerous people come to believe.
- Peter and the other disciples are now seeing how a single act of deliverance can have an even greater impact. When God saves one person, He uses them to reach many more.

**GOD'S ACTS OF
DELIVERANCE AFFECT
OTHERS AS WELL**

ACTS 9:36-43

PETER

- Luke then writes about Peter going to the nearby seaport town of Joppa, where a Christian woman named Tabitha lives (verse 36).
- The story has now reached beyond Jewish territory to an area full of Gentiles.
- Tabitha, who has just passed away, has been known for “good works and acts of charity” (verse 36). She is a non-Jewish Christian faithfully living in a way that is exemplary of the kingdom of God.

PETER

- This story illustrates that the Gospel has taken root outside Jerusalem.
- Gentiles are encountering the power and life transformation that the Holy Spirit brings.
- The other Christians in the city send for Peter to come immediately, possibly in hopes that he will be able to miraculously raise Tabitha from the dead (verse 38).

PETER

- The widows whom she cared for are deeply saddened by her departure and greet Peter with weeping upon his arrival at the house (verse 39).
- The witness of Tabitha's life has already touched many, and the impact is only going to increase.
- Peter sends everyone out, just as Jesus did before resurrecting a young girl (Matthew 9:24–25). He then prays to God, just as Elijah and Elisha did, and then commands Tabitha to get up.

PETER

- Peter calls the crowd of saints and widows back and presents the resurrected body of Tabitha (verse 41).
- The miracle is so incredible that her healing is told throughout the city, and many believe in Jesus.
- Luke records that Peter decides to remain in Joppa at the home of a man named Simon.
- This is the starting place for yet another miraculous expansion of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

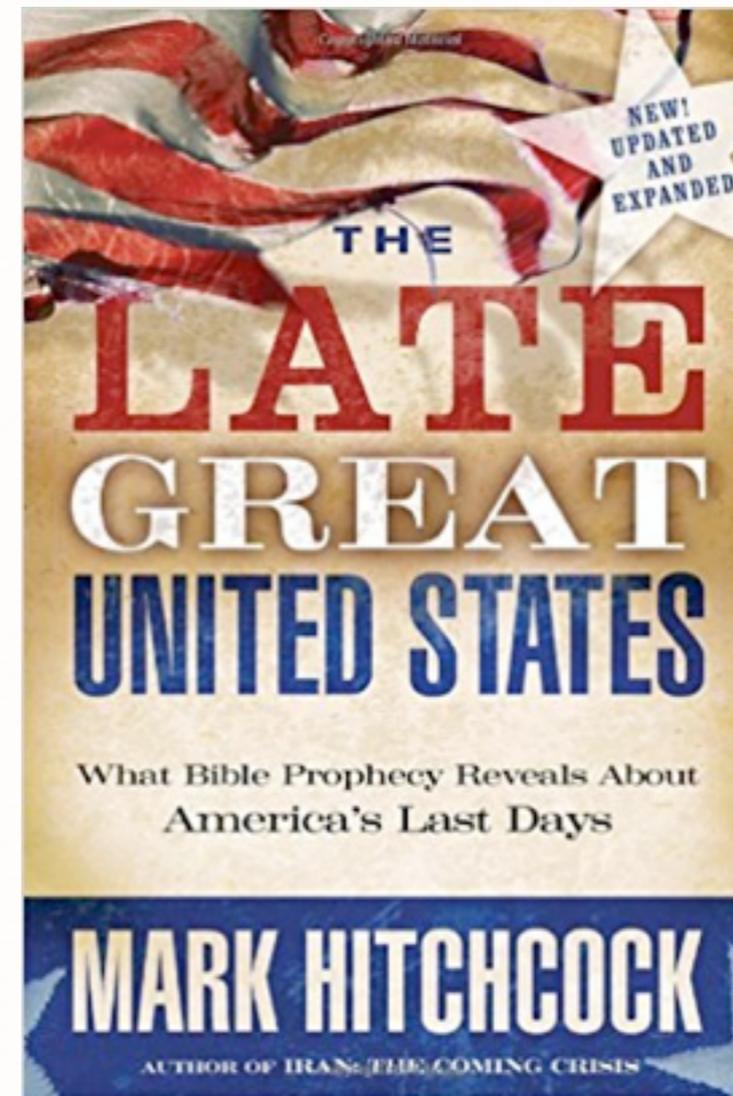
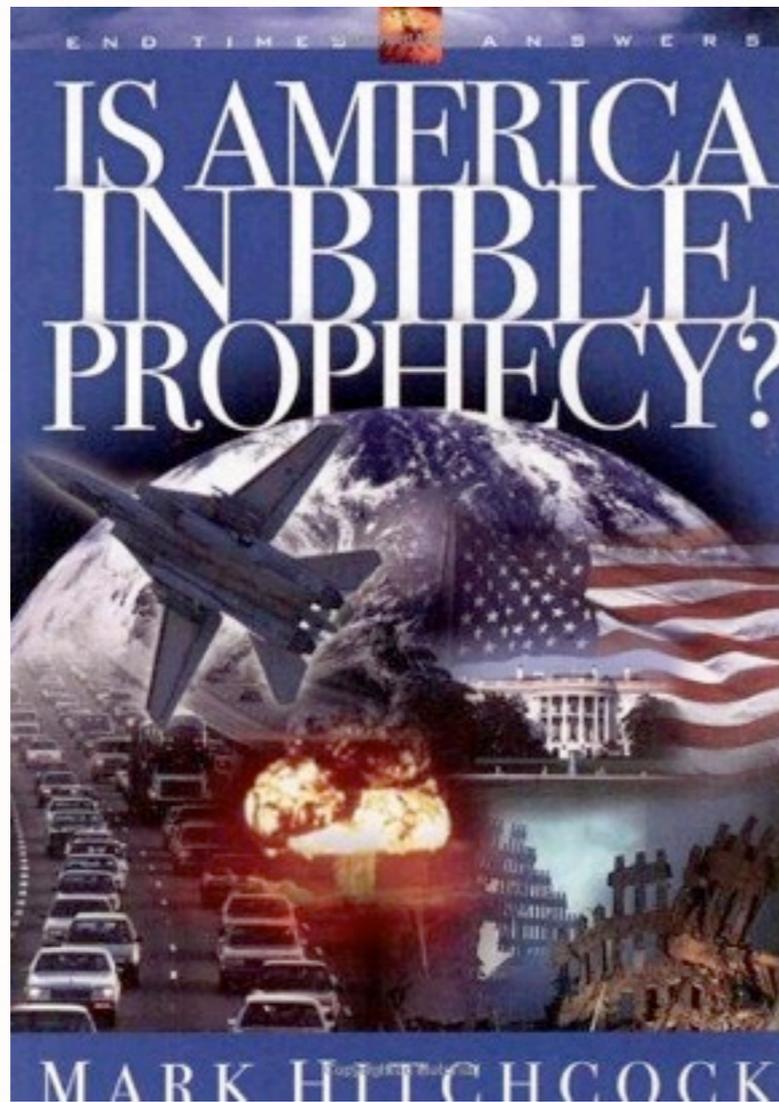
FOR DISCUSSION

- Saul had a remarkable change in his life that turned his life around. Have you seen such a life-changing example in your life or in others' lives?
- Peter had unexpected opportunities for ministry. Can you think of a time when you had an unexpected ministry opportunity?

ASK KERBY

AMERICA AND
PROPHECY

IS AMERICA IN PROPHECY?



AMERICA - BABYLON?

- Some Christians believe that America is mentioned in Revelation 18:9-11, especially since it talks about smoke from the buildings that are burning.
- Could it be that the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center points to New York City as “Babylon”?
- After all, New York City is a great commercial capital of the world and the location of the United Nations.
- The woman robed in scarlet is the Statue of Liberty.

AMERICA - BABYLON?

- Six times in Revelation, the city that is described as the last-days capital of Antichrist is specifically called Babylon (see 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21).
- Babylon is mentioned more times than any other city except Jerusalem: about 290 times. Whenever it is mentioned in Scripture, Babylon is pictured as the epitome of evil and rebellion against God
- The Euphrates River is mentioned by name twice in Revelation (see 9:14; 16:12).

AMERICA - ISAIAH 18?

- Isaiah 18 has a warning for a nation shadowed with wings that is a land beyond the sea from Israel whose land is divided by a river.
- The US is a nation that has the insignia of wings: the bald eagle.
- It is also a land that is beyond the sea from Israel.
- The United States is a land that is divided by the Mississippi River.

AMERICA - ISAIAH 18?

- Isaiah 18-20 is section that connects prophecy dealing with the ancient nations of Cush and Egypt.
- The phrase “the land shadowing with wings” does not refer to the wings of an eagle, but the whirring wings of insects that infested the Nile valley.
- The river that divides the country is the Nile River.

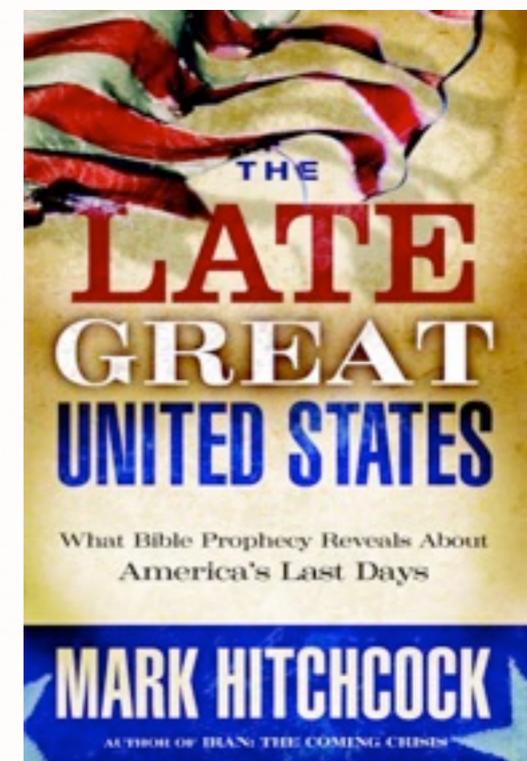
AMERICA - TARSHISH?

- In Ezekiel 38:13, it talks about “the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages.”
- Where was Tarshish? Remember that Jonah headed west to Tarshish instead of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-3).
- That might mean Europe. The “young lions of Tarshish” could be a reference to the colonies that emerged from Europe. If this is true, then the young lions of Tarshish could be the United States.

**WHAT HAPPENED
TO AMERICA?**

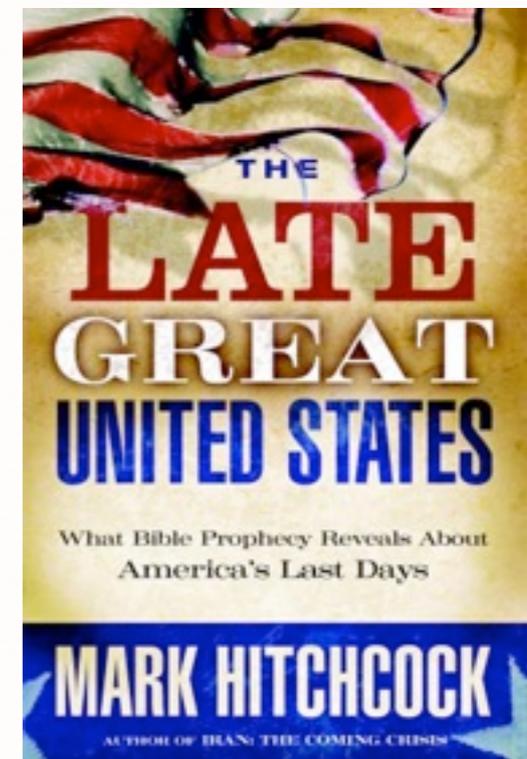
RAPTURE - AMERICA

- Mark Hitchcock notes that 42 percent of Americans claim to be “born-again Christians.”
- Barna puts the percentage of evangelicals around 8-10 percent.
- Using that figure, we are talking about the sudden disappearance of at least 25 million Americans.



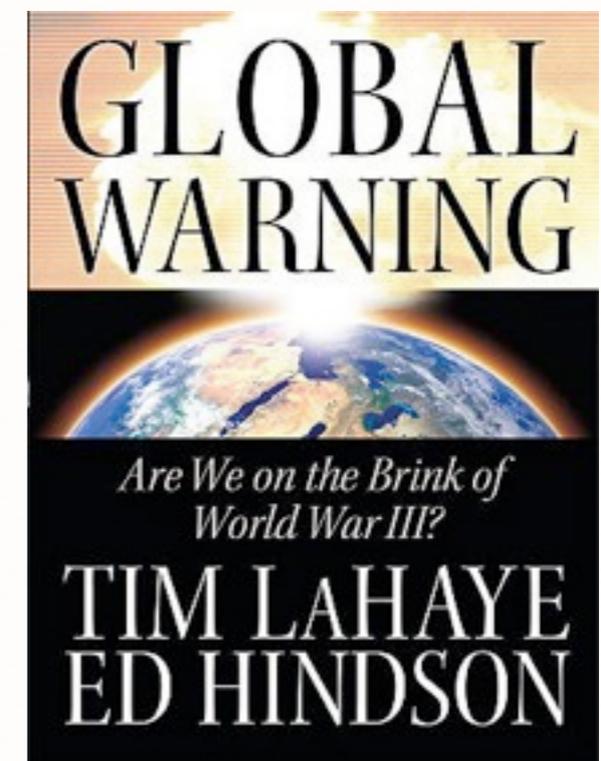
RAPTURE - AMERICA

- “The stock market will free fall. The NASDAQ will plummet. And talk about a mortgage meltdown. Millions of mortgages will plunge into irrecoverable default. America will be left reeling.”
- “Military personnel by the thousands ... permanently AWOL. Factory workers never show up for work again.”



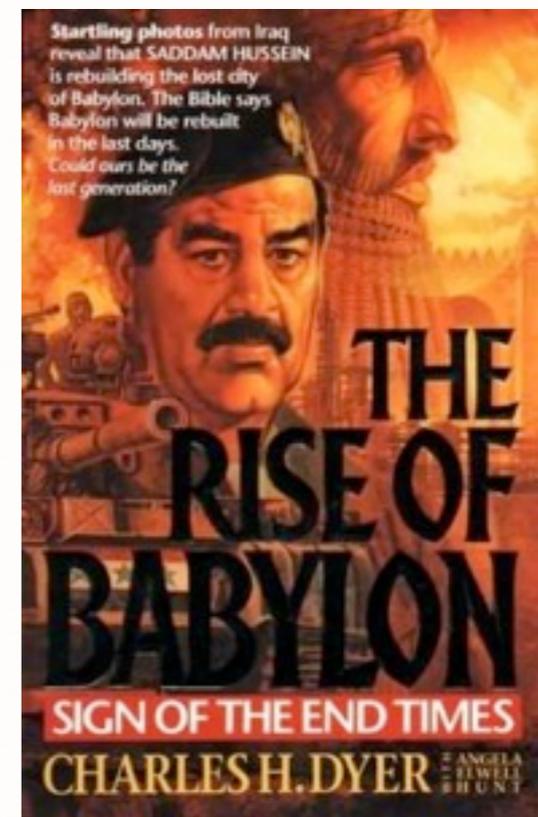
RAPTURE - AMERICA

- “America in particular would suffer great loss because of the high percentage of Christians who live in the United States. Consider what happened to the city of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.”
- “Imagine such an impact on every major city in America.”



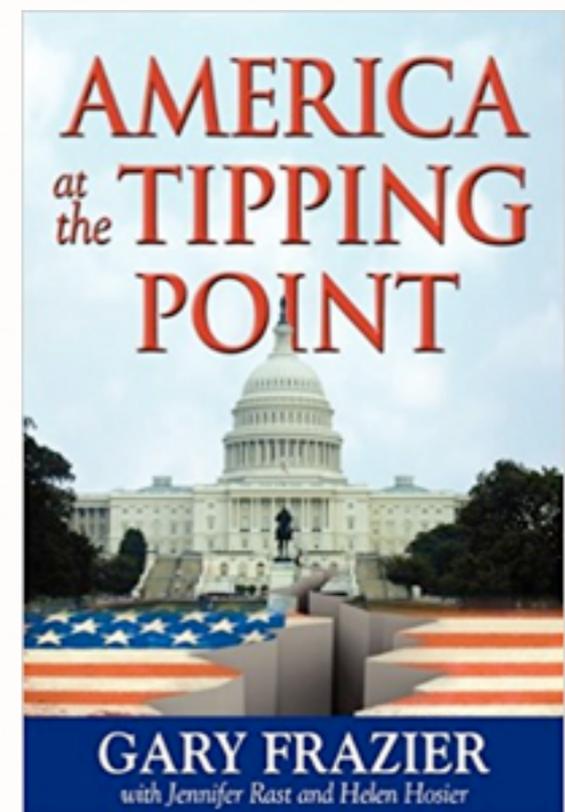
RAPTURE - AMERICA

- “Over 28 million Americans will suddenly disappear when God removes his church from the earth.”
- “Can you imagine the effects on our country if over 28 million people - people in industry, government, the military, business, education, medicine and communications - disappear?”



COLLAPSE OF AMERICA

- Gary Frazier argues that America may already be at a tipping point. It may not take much to push us over.
- Moral relativism, culture of death, a war on Christianity, loss of religious liberty.
- Economic (\$20 trillion national debt), social turmoil, political ineffectiveness.
- Nuclear attack, terrorist attacks.



FOR DISCUSSION

- Saul had a remarkable change in his life that turned his life around. Have you seen such a life-changing example in your life or in others' lives?
- Peter had unexpected opportunities for ministry. Can you think of a time when you had an unexpected ministry opportunity?
- In light of this discussion of end-times, what will you do to reach out to the unsaved?