

THE
DAY
APPROACHING

AMIR TSARFATI



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The Day Approaching

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CHAPTER 1

ANY DAY NOW

MANY MORNINGS I'LL WAKE UP, pour myself a cup of coffee, then take my Bible out to my back porch. As I settle into a cushioned chair, I'll take in the beautiful scene below me. Stretched out for miles is fertile land colored by whatever bountiful crop has been sown in it. Often there is a light breeze that the predatory birds take full advantage of as they hunt their scurrying prey. Taking in this beauty, my first thought is often, *Coffee is the greatest proof that there is a Creator God*. But my second thought is how unbelievable it is that conceivably in less than a decade or two that whole valley below me will be filling up with the armies of many nations. These armies will unite to march south to destroy the city of Jerusalem.

You see, that beautiful panorama below my backyard is the Jezreel Valley, also known as the Valley of Megiddo, also known as the Valley of Armageddon. If I see those armies gathering together, that will alert me to the following: First, I know that Israel has already endured a devastating attack—likely nuclear in nature. I know that

a great world leader has arisen, uniting the nations of the world. I know that earthquakes and famines and other natural disasters have devastated the earth. I know that in Jerusalem a new temple has been built. And I know that the Mount of Olives is ready to feel the feet of the returning Savior, who will come as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

I also know that I will not be around to see any of this taking place. If those armies are down there, then I'm not up here—sipping on my coffee, enjoying the view. I'll already be in heaven. I'll be in the presence of my Savior, having been snatched up by Him seven years previously. And I'll be preparing to return with Him to this earth one more time. So, if you're planning on still being around at the end of the great tribulation, I'll leave the keys under the front mat for you—it should be quite a view.

God is working out His plan. There will soon be a day when the church is taken up to meet Jesus in the air. There will come a time when God disciplines the people of Israel in a way that ultimately leads to their repentance. And there will come a day when those who have rejected the free gift of God's salvation will suffer His wrath because of their sins.

The *what* of this coming day isn't the primary question of this book. I dealt with the rapture and the Antichrist in great detail in my previous book, *The Last Hour*. While we will deal with some of the events of the tribulation in *The Day Approaching*, our main focus here will be on the *when*.

Now, it's time for me to come 100 percent clean with you. I have no clue as to the day and time of Christ's return. But I'm in good company. No person knows the day and time. The angels don't know. Not even the Son of God Himself knows. Jesus said, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36). The Father has got the timing

planned out to the minute, but He's keeping His cards close to His chest. What I can tell you is that as I look at the events unfolding in the world around us, I firmly believe that the day of Jesus' return is rapidly approaching.

I don't know about you, but I can't wait for that day when I see Jesus. I think about it. I imagine what it will be like. I study the Scriptures to learn all I can about it. This longing to see my Savior is not only in my heart, but also on my lips. I believe that we should proclaim our desire for Jesus to come. The apostle John wrote in the book of Revelation, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!'" (22:17). John himself expressed his own desire when he said, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (verse 20). Have you asked Jesus to come? Have you expressed to Him your excitement at seeing Him and your desire to be with Him forever? Have you ever taken a moment to close your eyes and picture what it will be like?

Imagine sitting around the dinner table with your family. You're about to take your first bite of your wife's wonderful spaghetti bolognese when you feel something happening—a tingling, a lightness—and suddenly, you are airborne. As you and your family shoot upward, you barely have time to see the look of wonder on their faces when another face catches your full attention. You recognize it immediately, even though you've never seen it before. It is the face of Jesus in all His glory and majesty. All the pains, fears, worries, and sorrows of the world are left behind in your recently departed dining room. Only joy, peace, and happiness await you as you enter into eternity.

This is the rapture. It is not just a story. It is not a feel-good religious fairy tale. It is an actual event that will take place in real time in the real world. I must admit that as I travel around the globe, I am amazed at how many people in the churches that I visit don't believe

in the rapture. Others, more than not believing in it, are hostile to the whole idea. They don't even want to hear it mentioned.

I was speaking to a pastor friend of mine not long ago who told me that rather than looking forward to the advent of Christ's rule on earth, he believes we are now living in the kingdom of God. He says that all the events described in Revelation took place by AD 70. When Rome destroyed the temple and slaughtered thousands of Jews, the wrath of God was sated. No more need for judgment; no more need for hell. Our satisfied Lord will eventually save everyone. I was shocked to hear the extent of this pastor's deception.

We are living in a time of great anticipation surrounding the soon return of Christ, but it is also a time of great apostasy. Many antichrists exist in the world, both outside of the church and inside. As believers, we must know the truth of God's plan for mankind and how we fit into it. It is out of this knowledge that we find our mission and our hope.

GOD WANTS YOU TO KNOW HIS PLAN

The title of this chapter is "Any Day Now." If you have ever been on a tour with me, you will recognize this phrase immediately. I say these words probably 50 times a day to those who are casually finishing their cup of coffee or browsing for their next olive wood purchase while everyone else is waiting for them on the bus. It is often accompanied by an eye-roll or a wave of my watch. If these stragglers would have taken the time to look around, they would realize that they were the only members of the tour who weren't with the rest of the group.

If we take the time to look around us, we can't help but realize that there is a strong sense of Any Day Now in the world. It is so obvious to me, and I'm not the only one who feels it. In early 2017, the number of Google searches for "World War 3" hit its highest level ever. What precipitated this spike? The combination

of President Donald Trump's escalation of activities in Syria and his dealings with North Korea.¹ Both of these situations have calmed since that moment of national panic, but there is still a sense that something significant is going on. Within us is a built-in curiosity about what is going to happen in the future, and a sense that the way the world is now must eventually come to an end.

Much of this curiosity stems from a fear of the unknown. Newspapers and 24-hour cable news channels are constantly bombarding readers and viewers with why they should be terrified if the US president does this or Iran does that or North Korea does something. Not long ago, a headline in *The Telegraph* read "World 'on the brink of thermo-nuclear war', as North Korea mulls test that could goad Trump."² Try getting a good night's sleep after reading that. People accuse Christians and the Bible of being doomsayers, but it's actually the media who are the doomsayers. In contrast, it's Christ and the Bible that give hope. It's Christ and the Bible that say, "Yes, eventually this world is going to blow apart. But let Me tell you how you can ensure yourself a flight out of here before it happens."

God wants you to know His plans—His plans for the world, for Israel, for the church, and for you. Are you interested in knowing the future? Then you need to go to the One who laid it out. He's already written what will happen; you just need to read it. Where should you start? All you need to know about what's coming was revealed through God's prophets.

These prophets were faithful yet tragic figures. The last thing anyone wanted to hear was God saying, "Guess what? I'm choosing you to be My prophet." The prophets were destined for a life of struggle, suffering, and pain. Yet nearly all raised their hands when God called. When the Lord asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?," like Isaiah, they stepped up and said, "Here am I! Send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

These days, everybody wants to be a prophet. I guess it's because there is profit in being a prophet. I am not a prophet. I come from a nonprofit organization. Today's prophets teach their own opinions and call them words from the Lord. But man's opinion doesn't come close to meeting the biblical standard for prophecy. "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21). When Jeremiah and Isaiah and Hosea and Malachi and all the other prophets spoke prophetically, they were not speaking their own thoughts and viewpoints. Prophecy originates in the mind of God, and then is spoken through the mouths of His chosen messengers.

God's prophetic message—His plan for this world—has been revealed to us in the Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, the Lord lays out His blueprint for eternity step by step and piece by piece. Despite the fact He has given us 66 books of revelation, there are many who look only to the New Testament for their eternal guidance. They assume that the Old Testament was just fine for its time, but then Jesus came along and brought the New. The Old was great for the Jews, but we're the church. Who wants the Old when you can have the New and improved?

So much of what God wants us to know about the future is found in the distant past—before the church and the New Testament. If we limit ourselves to Matthew 24–25 and the book of Revelation, we will get only part of the story. In Hebrews we read that "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son" (1:1-2). The God who spoke His truth through Jesus and the New Testament writers is the same God who pulled back the curtain on the end times through the Old Testament prophets.

When we read the words of Malachi or Zechariah or Hosea, we

know they are from the mouth of the Lord. The prophet was just a spokesperson. He likely understood very little of what he saw and said. In fact, in many cases, today we understand much more than the prophets ever did about what God is going to do as He brings salvation to the church, discipline to the Jews, and wrath upon the earth. And so much of what we see in the prophets and the New Testament seems to indicate that this great Day of the Lord is coming closer and closer.

THE TIMES ARE MOVING FORWARD

History is moving forward, and the events that are rapidly approaching can be separated into two categories: those we can do something about, and those we can't. Most future happenings fall into the latter category. When the angel Gabriel came to the prophet Daniel, he told him what was definitely going to happen. He said, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city" (Daniel 9:24). The events that Gabriel spoke of *will* take place—they've been determined. You can try to stop the works of God, but you won't get very far. Imagine a speeding train hurtling in your direction. It doesn't matter how earnestly you desire to stop it, that's not going to happen. You can brace your feet. You can grit your teeth. You can scream at the train with all your might, "Thou shalt not pass!" Still, within moments, the train will run right over you and you'll be flattened like a pita.

If the world's future is so much out of our control, does that mean we are utterly doomed? Is there anything we can do to give ourselves hope in God's grand plan? Most certainly. We can choose to follow Christ, giving ourselves to Him as our Lord and Savior. If we do that, then we are assured that when He returns for His church, we will be taken to Him.

However, if we choose to reject Him—or even if we simply

ignore the choice, which is the same as turning our backs on Him—we will be left to experience the terrors of judgment. What a simple choice! Either we choose life eternal or we choose death. We will choose to escape the wrath of God, or we will choose to experience the tribulation and suffer for all eternity apart from our Creator. There is no other decision that we can make in our life that presents such a stark contrast. Praise the Lord that He has given us the opportunity to choose Him! But the day of choosing is now.

Why must it be now? Because the time left for making a choice may soon come to an end. As we keep our eyes on the news, it seems more and more as if the final days are nearly at hand. One key sign of the day approaching will take place in Syria. Isaiah prophesied that Damascus will one day be utterly annihilated: “Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap” (17:1). Up until recently, most people in the world had never even heard about Damascus. Those who did knew it as the “City of Jasmine,” with a wonderful historical and modern culture. But now, as the center of the Syrian conflict, the city is on the front page of the newspapers almost daily. As hostilities not only continue but increase, it is not hard to envision the eventual leveling of that ancient city.

The times are moving forward. The Lord is shifting all the players into position and is setting up the playing field. Just one example of God’s logistical work that would have been unheard of a mere decade ago relates to plans for a project under the Mediterranean Sea. This will be the longest underwater pipeline in the world, from Israel to Italy. This pipeline will carry natural gas from Israel’s recently found gas fields to the European Union. Sounds wonderful, doesn’t it? It does if you’re not from Russia. What Putin and his cronies see is an upstart nation stealing their customers. Russia, whose economy is already shaky, can’t afford to lose the European market, and they won’t just sit by and watch their largest customer get taken away.

There are three truths that become evident as we observe current events. First, the events prophesied in the Word of God are taking shape all around us. The new ideas and plans of today's world leaders were known and talked about by God 2,800 years ago. There is no move that can be made that will take God off-guard. There is no strategy that can be implemented that He has not considered. King Solomon writes, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes" (Proverbs 21:1). When presidents and kings and prime ministers believe they are exercising their own great power and authority, they are actually following God's lead.

Second, there is a smoke screen of deception surrounding world events that is confusing many people. They are buying into the lies proclaimed by the media and politicians. An example of this fake news has to do with the chemical attacks by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad upon his people. One group of people say, "Of course he did it. That's the kind of person he is." While others say, "How can you say such a thing? He would never do that to his people."

Even Christians get caught up in this kind of duplicity and fight amongst each other. Why? Is it so surprising that Syria would gas its own people? I'll let you in on a little secret if you promise to keep it just between us: I know the name of the Syrian pilot who dropped chemical bombs on his people. I know the name of his aircraft. The Israeli government knows his address and phone number. We know where he took off from, when he did it, and we have a video of him dropping the bombs. Yet Christians still argue over whether these kinds of things have happened. Why do we let Satan divide us over politics and opinions?

Still, in the midst of all the deception and division, we see tremendous acts of God's people showing His love. On Palm Sunday of 2017, there was a horrific attack in Egypt. ISIS targeted two

Coptic churches, and the bomb blasts killed 47 and injured at least 109.³ So many lives taken, so many bodies maimed. Yet how did the leaders of the Coptic church respond? Believe it or not, they thanked ISIS. You may wonder how that is possible after such an atrocity. First, they thanked the terrorists because they had sent 47 people into the arms of Jesus. In the moment of that blast, those who were killed saw their Savior face to face. Second, since that attack, their churches have been absolutely packed. All those who were lazy about coming to worship are now running to church.

As if thanking their enemies was not enough, the leaders of the Coptic church followed up by telling their ISIS attackers, “We love you.” They told the extremists that they understood they are caught up in a lie and don’t know the truth. Finally, the church leaders went one step further. They said, “And we commit to praying for you.”⁴ This put Jesus’ words from the Sermon on the Mount into flesh: “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:44-45). These brothers and sisters of the Coptic church showed themselves to be sons and daughters of their Father in heaven and ambassadors of the love of their Savior.

For those of us who are Christians, death has truly lost its sting. Christ in us allows us to love our enemies and pray for those who would do us harm. This is because we can see the bigger picture. We have not become lost in the smoke screen of deception. We know that for us, “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). No longer should we be afraid of death. When our time comes, we can go happily into that dark night knowing that the light of eternal life awaits us.

The third truth we learn from observing current events is that God is revealing Himself to people all around the world. There are

changes taking place in people's hearts and the gospel is finding its way into places never before reached. This is the direct hand of God at work. I receive hundreds of emails and messages every day from every corner of the globe—Malaysia, the Philippines, Japan, North America, Australia, South America, Israel, Europe. What so many of these people are writing is, "Amir, I'm having visions," or "Amir, I keep having these dreams." The prophet Joel wrote:

It shall come to pass afterward
that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions.
And also on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days (Joel 2:28-29).

These people who write to me say that God has spoken to them in a clear way, saying, "I am coming soon." People in China and Mexico and New Zealand are all hearing the same message independently from one another. God is moving. He is speaking. He is coming soon.

As we read the newspapers and watch the cable channels, a contrast becomes evident. On the one hand, everything seems to be falling apart. The talking heads will tell you nightly that we're all doomed and a nuclear holocaust is right around the corner. On the other hand, when we look through the lens of Scripture, everything is falling into place. The newspaper writers can't see it. They are trying to make sense of what's going on without having the capacity to understand. It's like small children trying to explain quantum physics—they simply don't have the capacity to do that. But when we look at

God is moving.
He is speaking.
He is coming soon.

world events through the lens of the Bible, we find the key to unlocking the truth.

“But wait,” you may say, “the news and the Bible are two different things. The news is about now. The Bible is history and was written thousands of years ago.” True, the Bible is history. But the Bible is also His story. It is the story of God’s plan for this earth from the very beginning to the very end. In the pages of Scripture, you will find what was, what is, and what is yet to come. In fact, what you see happening in many of the nations today is right out of the Bible.

“Wait, Amir, are you going to tell me that Russia is in the Bible?” Yes! “Egypt and Ethiopia are in the Bible?” Yes and yes! “Iran and Turkey and Sudan?” Yes, yes, and yes! Much of what you see around you with the growing world powers and their alliances is straight out of the pages of biblical prophecy.

Ezekiel 38 tells us of the evil intentions of Russia when it describes how Ros will be led down to Israel as if a hook were put into its jaw. Ros will come down not for the purpose of peace, but plunder. Today, the Russians are the number one player in the Syrian civil war, and they don’t even try to hide the fact that they are there primarily for the gas and oil. Russia’s only warm-water seaport giving access to the Mediterranean and the Middle East is in Syria. That’s why Russia backs the government of Bashar al-Assad.

Who does Ezekiel say will be aligned with Ros? None other than Persia, which is modern-day Iran. The Iranians’ goal is to be poised on Syria’s border with Israel so that when the attack does come, they will be ready to pour into the Jewish state. Also in this Russian alliance are Sudan and Libya. The Russians have long had an interest in the oil fields of Libya and are looking for opportunities to put their nose under the Libyan tents. Oil, gas, Russia—it is no surprise to find them linked together again.

Standing with Israel against these enemies are Jordan and,

through more recent and unofficial alliances, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Surprisingly to many, the Saudis have signed a secret deal with Israel, saying, “If you want to attack Iran, feel free to use our airspace.”⁵ The Saudis did add a caveat promising that if Israel admitted to this alliance, they would deny it and condemn Israel in the UN. Is this secret alliance with Saudi Arabia spoken of in the Bible? No. But long before that region was called Saudi Arabia, it was called Sheba and Dedan. “Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, ‘Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?’” (Ezekiel 38:13). Saudi Arabia will not join in the attack against Israel because they are allies. But neither will Saudi Arabia try to stop it. They will stand by ready to collect the spoils of what they assume will be a devastated nation.

And who is standing there next to the Saudis ready to scavenge? The merchants of Tarshish and all their young lions—Europe (the home of the city of Tarshish) and America (the ferocious young nation that was birthed out of Europe). Some 2,000, 3,000, even 4,000 years ago, God knew the identity of the players on today’s political stage. Using the names of the countries in those times, He explained exactly what His future plans are.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

One day in the midst of all the crazy busyness of His ministry, Jesus took a break. He left the temple, went through a gate in the walls of Jerusalem, and walked up the Mount of Olives. There He sat by Himself and took in the view of the Holy City. Whether He was thinking or praying or just enjoying the silence, we don’t know. What we do know is that His private moment didn’t last long. The disciples had been troubled by something that Jesus had just said

to them at the temple. They had been oohing and aahing over the beauty of the temple, but rather than admiring the magnificent structure along with them, the Lord had said, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2).

Troubled, the disciples approached Him for some answers. “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (verse 3).

Rather than rebuff them or plead His need for a little “Me” time, Jesus gave them an amazing answer. He told them that people would come seeking to deceive them and claim that Christ has returned. Wars and rumors of wars will have people shaking in their sandals, but the disciples were not to be afraid. “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (verses 7-8). The world is going to get violent and dangerous, Jesus said, but that’s just the beginning.

Look around the world today. Did Jesus just describe our time? Earthquake activity continues to increase. In just the last 6 years we have seen major volcanic eruptions from Mount Etna (Italy), Mount Sinabung (Indonesia), Mount Kelud (Indonesia), Mount Ontake (Japan), and Mount Calbuco (Chile). In 2018, Volcán de Fuego blew in Guatemala, killing 190 people. Later that same year, the infamous Anak Krakatoa in Indonesia erupted, which caused a tsunami that killed nearly 450 people and injured more than 14,000 more.⁶ Famine continues to spread too. The UN has declared famine conditions in South Sudan, Yemen, Nigeria, and Somalia.⁷ This desperate lack of food is not due to weather conditions but is mostly the result of rampant government corruption. All of what Jesus described exists today in our world, and in ever-increasing intensity.

How do you feel when you watch the news? Do you get nervous?

Do you stay awake at night worrying? Let me tell you, there is no reason to stay awake. I live in a very safe country. However, I also live in a nation that is hated by most of the people who surround us. Many times I've had my day interrupted by an app on my phone that alerts me when rockets are fired from Gaza or the West Bank into Israel. Imagine if rockets were regularly fired across your borders into your country. Despite that, I sleep like a baby every night. My peace comes from the fact that even if a rocket happened to break through our Iron Dome missile defense and land on the roof of my house, my family and I would wake up in the presence of our Savior. And in that coming time when Russia finally decides to take what belongs to Israel, it can drop all the bombs it wants on my house. My family and I won't be there. We'll be testing out our new bodies with the rest of the raptured church.

The news is bleak and the world is on a downward slide. The Bible says that when you begin to see these things take place, don't let your head droop down in sorrow. Instead, look up—your redemption is drawing near. Does that excite you? It should. Jesus is returning for His church, and we could meet Him in the clouds any day now.