

A BIMONTHLY NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED ON THE WESTSIDE, FOR THE WESTSIDE!

What If There Is a Nuclear War?

At the time of writing, the talk is of nuclear war breaking out with North Korea. Now that is a grim prospect as we enter the bright and sunny days of June. But war is a respecter of no month. The nuclear missile tests go on in North Korea, there's chatter of preemptive strikes against the U.S. or by the U.S., and we're waiting to see how the major powers line up if a regional conflict turns into a global war. One thing is certain, not since before the end of the Cold War have we heard so much of the possibilities of World War III and of the **inclusion** of the use of nuclear weapons.

While we do not wish to speak up such an eventuality, and pray that the saber-rattling proves to be deterrent enough, history warns us against underestimating man's ability to destroy himself and his environment. Thus, it is worth considering the implications of nuclear conflict. Given that back in the 1980s we were told we would get four minutes to prepare for nuclear attack, it makes sense to think through our personal response to **such a scenario while we have the chance to do so**. Three attitudes likely prevail:

Complacency: Complacency comes in at least two varieties. There are those who insist on disbelieving such a thing is possible, at least until it actually happens. Then, there are those who fleetingly entertain the possibility, but say they will deal with it, if or when it comes. To some degree these attitudes are understandable, since we don't want to think the worst, and can't do much about a nuclear strike anyway. Yet, complacency is an unreliable confidence. The complacent bank on things they cannot control—that North Ko-

rean missiles cannot reach America, and that American missile interceptors will always work. The 2002 film *The Sum of All Fears* (starring Ben Affleck and Morgan Freeman) depicting the smuggling of a nuclear bomb through Baltimore, suggests the concern is real. Complacency, however, is not new. A number of times the Bible speaks of those who want to “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die” (Ecclesiastes 8:15; Isaiah 22:13; Luke 12:19).

Paralysis: Whereas the complacent find “comfort” in underthinking the possibilities, the fearful ponder every eventuality and in a state of hopelessness. They, especially, typify the human race, and are referred to in the Letter to the Hebrews, when the author writes of those “who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (2:15).

Faith: Unlike complacency, faith is a reliable trust. Unlike paralysis, faith overcomes fear. This is because the faith which saves in life and **in** death rests entirely upon Jesus Christ. But what, you may ask, does faith in Jesus have to do with the possibility of nuclear conflict? Everything!

- Jesus promises **eternal** life to all those who believe on him. He says, in effect, that there is life beyond this life, no matter how the believer ends his or her days on this present earth (**John 3:16; 17:1–3**).
- Jesus promises that the world as we know it will end with his return, and not, therefore, by nuclear destruction (**Matthew 27:64**).
- Jesus promises not the destruction of the world but its regeneration—a new world **wherein his innumerable followers will live with him forever** (**Matthew 19:28**), **without sin, sorrow, pain, nor death** (**Revelation 21:4**).



What Will the End of this World Be Like ?

Answer: That Depends on What We Do with the Love of God

For the Person Rejecting God's Love in Christ

There is never a day when God, being impeccably just, could not justify condemning the human race in its sin. Each of us knows this in our consciences. Yet, in love he continues to reach out to us, every day and everywhere. Creation proclaims his love for our race, providence affirms it, and Christ's work on the cross shows us how we may come to experience it through reconciliation to God.

For so long as we reject God's love in Christ, we say that we prefer our sin, and thereby his justice to his love. To warn us of the eternal dangers of this preference, God begins to reveal his wrath in this life (Romans 1:18–32). He does so to urge us to flee to Christ for shelter from that wrath to be revealed on the Last Day. Then, our opportunities to embrace Christ will end, for he who came as Savior is going to return as Judge.

Accordingly, the Day of Jesus Christ will be for those rejecting God's love, a:

Day of mourning: Jesus said that "the tribes of the earth" will mourn upon seeing him come with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30). Many will realize too late that Jesus was dead (pierced) so that they may be acquitted (Revelation 1:7).

Day of separation: Jesus said that he will judge the race from his "glorious throne," gathering all the nations before him to separate "the sheep" (believers) from "the goats" (unbelievers) (Matthew 25:31f.).

Day of rejection: Christ promises to ratify the decision of those rejecting his love with the words, "Depart from me you cursed into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). This is not spite, but Christ's warning that if we reject his payment for sin then we have implicitly chosen to pay for it ourselves. Since the unbeliever can never satisfy God's justice, he or she faces the prospect of eternally regretting the rejection of God's love.



For the Person Embracing God's Love in Christ

How contrasting is the prospect of the Lord Jesus' return for those who know him! The first-century Christians exclaimed "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20). They yearned to see their Lord in his power and glory, to worship him and to fellowship with him on the new earth.

Then, Christ's followers shall be made perfect in holiness. This means we'll no longer wrestle with the sin for which Christ died; be tempted by our flesh, the world, or the devil; or suffer afflictions through life in a fallen world (regularly used of God to test us, to strengthen us, and to make us like Christ). Then, **all** persecutions of the Christian church will cease, since the enemies of Christ will have been vanquished forever. For them God's wrath is especially reserved. Christ will stand eternally on the side of those oppressed and martyred for his sake.

Specifically, the Day of the Lord Jesus will be for his followers a:

Day of admiration: We deduce from Acts 1:11 that Christ's return will be personal, bodily, sudden, and glorious. Whereas his glory will terrify those choosing to remain in their sins, Christ, says the apostle Paul, will be marveled at by all who believe (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

Day of acceptance: Having separated his followers ("the sheep") from the rest of humanity ("the goats"), Christ will declare to those who love him: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

Day of liberation: The kingdom believers inherit is the new earth to come. Even now, says Paul, the whole creation groans not in the pangs of death (as would be the case if the world were to end by nuclear war), but in the pains of childbirth, waiting to see the unveiling and liberation of the children of God (Romans 8:18f.).

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will not pass away. But concerning that day and hour no man knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."

—Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:35–36)

“Churchianity” Is not Christianity!

Tim J.R. Trumper

There’s a saying, “Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian anymore than standing in a garage makes you a car!” Growing up in a Christian family I learned that this is true, and that there is a world of difference between “churchianity” and Christianity.

Distinguishing “Churchianity” from Christianity

My parents were able to teach me this, for they had earlier **learned to distinguish** “churchianity” and Christianity for themselves. Whereas my father had, as a teenager, deserted the hypocrisy and shallowness of nominal Christianity for an angry atheism, he soon discovered true Christianity through faith in Jesus Christ. By the time I came along, he had given up a promising career as a professional actor in order to preach to others the good news he had found in Jesus. Likewise, my mother came to faith in Christ as a teenager. Although her father promised “to beat Christianity out of her,” he, too, came to know the Lord Jesus, later serving as a leader (Elder) in the church where my father was the minister.

Accordingly, Dad and Mom **desired** their four children to understand that while true Christians go to church, it is not church attendance **of itself** which makes a person a Christian. Rather, a Christian is someone who has encountered God. These encounters, called conversion, may differ in their circumstances, but are marked by four senses:

- **A sense of God**—the greatness of his size, the beauty of his holiness, the perfection of his justice, and the wonder of his love and compassion.
- **A sense of self**—our smallness in comparison to God, the offensiveness to God of our personal sins, and our inability to satisfy his justice or to procure a relationship with him.
- **A sense of Christ**—our vital need of him, for he has lived the perfect life we could never live, and has received in his death the reward of our sin.
- **A sense of purpose**—blessed with such a full and free forgiveness, and now relating in love to God, the Christian dedicates his or her life to God’s glory, and seeks in this world to serve him for the benefit of others.

Distinguishing Historical Faith from Saving Faith

Since an encounter with God begins with faith in Christ, I decided early on to believe in him. However, I did not understand what the Bible has in mind when it calls us to

believe (John 3:16). I confused what is called historical faith with saving faith.

Historical faith is purely of the intellect and simply believes the Bible to be true. Yet, one can have historical faith without a change of heart toward God. **Indeed, this is the problem with “cultural Christianity”—a possession of historical faith without a personal encounter with God.**

Saving faith, by contrast, includes historical faith, but is exercised from the heart and not simply from the mind. Saving faith includes not only knowledge, but also conviction of personal sin, and trust in Jesus for forgiveness.

Not until I was fifteen did the knowledge acquired to that point begin to instill the conviction that there is a great chasm between God and me, seismically and morally. From a human perspective my life was unimpeachable, yet I came to see how my so-called respectable sins—pride, self-centeredness, anger, bitterness, hidden lust—were seen by God for what they were. Left to myself, I had neither power nor desire to become a new person. I could, perhaps, change my habits, but could not change my heart. I thus became convinced that Christ alone could save me from myself.

I came to a true trust in Christ on August 14, 1981. Significant in this regard was the realization that the repeated promise of Scripture that “whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” was not a glib sentiment. It is a promise from the God who cannot lie. I, **therefore**, claimed this promise and would not let go of it until I knew that God had heard me and that Jesus had become my Savior and Lord. My longing boiled down to this singular desire, to be able to say that, “Jesus is mine.” That sunny morning, I went into a prayer meeting greatly depressed on account of my sinfulness, but left it rejoicing that my sins were forgiven. “Churchianity” had given way to true Christianity!

Thirty-six years later, I gladly testify that God has never let me down nor let me go. I persevere in the faith, assured

that I am being divinely preserved. His purpose is that I should look increasingly like Jesus, sharing the good news that if he can save me he can save you! Why not also call



*****ECRWSEDDM****

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WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

† **Sunday Services: 9:45 A.M. and 5:50 P.M.**

All are welcome

The services are also broadcast on WFUR 102.9 FM at 11 A.M. and 7 P.M.

† **Prayer**

All ages

Wednesdays



Needing prayer? Bring your burdens along to our close-knit prayer group. A warm welcome awaits you. Just come as you are! We all need God's help. Call the office for times.

† **Westside Soccer Club**

Grades 3–7

Tuesdays beginning June 13

Girls 4:00–5:30 P.M.

Boys 5:30–7:00 P.M.



The vision of WSC is to create and nurture a valuable learning atmosphere, where Westside children can develop their soccer skills as well as character traits pleasing to God, such as good sportsmanship, fair play, teamwork, giving one's best, perseverance, respect for opponents and officials.

MONTHLY EVENTS

Men of Seventh Together (MOST)

Saturdays, June 17 and July 15, 7:00 A.M.

Calling men to join men of Seventh for an informal breakfast followed by discussion of Patrick Johnson's book *Man in the Mirror*.

ENDED UNTIL FALL

† **GEMS and Cadets—
Girls' and Boys' Clubs
Grades I–6**



GEMS is an exciting, safe environment for girls to learn about God, His Word, and His world. Each meeting girls will have a Bible lesson, a time for crafts, and practice movement to our theme song for the year.

In Luke 2:52—
“Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men”—we find



**THE CALVINIST
CADET CORPS**

the goal of Cadets, to help boys grow spiritually in all areas of life (devotional, mental, physical, and social) by providing Christian men with a uniquely designed structure, program, and materials.

† **English as a Second Language**

Our all ages ESL class is available to any looking to improve English skills (reading, writing, pronunciation) in a casual individualized setting. Learners of any skill level are welcome to join the class!



Questions about our worship services, other activities, or church? Contact us at 616-459-4451 or 7thref@7thref.org. We invite you to follow the church on Facebook and on Twitter (@7thRefCh).