

# The Destroyer

*by: Ronald L. Dart*

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There was a time when we knew what terrorists wanted. When they blew up something they identified themselves and they made their demands. We knew what they wanted; we knew why they wanted it. All that has changed. Now they don't identify their cause, they don't make any demands, they just kill people. What do they want? Well at the time of the World Trade Center bombing I concluded that what they wanted was Americans dead and in very large numbers at that. But a recent editorial by Charles Krauthammer in *The Weekly Standard* has made me think I was more right than I knew. On the surface this is a religious war. But like a deadly iceberg, there is a lot more below the surface than above it. Charles Krauthammer opened his piece by observing that Europe's great religious wars ended some 350 years ago and as result there's been plenty of time for us to forget that it's possible for people to slaughter one another over a matter of religious faith. Now, that seems like a very odd thing to do. Krauthammer says, "Yet Osama Bin Laden could not be clearer, Jihad has been declared against the infidel whose power and influence thwart the triumph of Islam and whose success and example, indeed, whose very existence are an affront to the true faith. As a leader of Hamas declared at a rally three days after the World Trade Center attack, the only solution is for Bush to convert to Islam." Now, as funny as that sounds, the leader of Hamas was not trying to be funny. He was deadly serious. That's what he meant. The only solution was for Bush to convert to Islam and not only Bush, and not merely to Islam, take a good look at Afghanistan. That is the vision of society that Osama Bin Laden, Hamas and his gang want for the whole world. That's what they want you to live like if you live at all and they would frankly prefer that you did not.

Charles Krauthammer goes on to point out something I had entirely overlooked at the time it happened. He said in March the Taliban went to the Afghan desert where there were two great monuments of human culture; two massive Buddhas carved out of a cliff. And you know, I remember seeing the pictures of those things standing up there. They first of all, these great massive statues, they tried artillery and that couldn't bring them down. But then finally, we saw the pictures of it, the 1500-year old masterpieces actually wouldn't fall and they resorted to dynamite. They blew the statues to bits and then slaughtered 100 cows in atonement for having taken so long to finish the job. "Buddhism is hardly a representative of the west. It is hardly a cause of poverty and destitution. It is hardly a symbol of colonialism. No, the statues represented two things: an alternative faith and a great work of civilization. To the Taliban, the presence of both was intolerable."

We need to get this straight once and for all. To these people, the presence of an alternative faith is intolerable. The presence of great works of civilization is intolerable. What some

Muslim people do yet know is that their version of Islam is just as intolerable to the Taliban as Buddhism is. The Islam of much of the world is completely an alien religion to Osama Bin Laden and his ilk.

Charles Krauthammer quoted another distinguished author in his piece which, by the way, appeared in *The Weekly Standard* October 22, 2001. “The distinguished Indian writer and now Nobel prize winner, V. S. Nipal, who has chronicled the Islamic world in two books recently warned in a public talk in Melbourne, Australia,” This was before the World Trade center attack by the way, “We are within reach of great nihilistic forces that have undone civilization. In places like Afghanistan, religion has been turned by some into a kind of nihilism where people wish to destroy themselves and destroy their past and their culture in order to be pure. They’re enraged about the world and they wish to pull it down.” Charles Krauthammer continues, “This kind of fury and fanaticism is unappeasable. It knows no social, economic or political solution. You cannot converge with this position because it holds that your life is worthless and your beliefs are criminal and should be extirpated.”

You heard it right. “Your life is worthless and your beliefs are criminal” and should be pulled up by the roots and stamped out. Yeah, that’s *you* I’m talking to. You can tell who shares this belief. They are the people who become outraged when Muslims are being killed and have absolutely when 5,000 Americans die in the World Trade Center.

Krauthammer continues to make his point, “This insight offers a needed window on the new enemy. It turns out that the enemy does not have recognizable analogs in the western experience. He is, as president Bush averred in his address to the nation, heir to the malignant ideology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In its nihilism, its will to power, its celebration of blood and death, its craving for the cleansing purity that comes only from eradicating life and culture, radical Islam is heir, above all, to Nazism. Now when I heard that, at first blush, I thought “ah I dunno maybe he’s gone a bridge to far on that particular thing.” But then he continued and I kept thinking. “The destruction of the World Trade Center was meant not only to reap terror like the smashing of the Buddahs, it was meant to obliterate greatness and beauty, elegance and grace. These artifacts represented civilization; embodied in stone or steel, they had to be destroyed.”

You know I think a lot of Americans are confused by this. It makes no sense by any standard that we can grasp. But I think I should pause just for a moment and define terms. He mentions nihilism; it’s defined as the total rejection of established laws and institution, anarchy, terrorism or other revolutionary activity, it’s the belief that all existence is senseless, that there is no possibility for an objective basis for truth, nothingness, non-existence. You can see quickly that there’s no reasoning with this perverted view. For they don’t believe there is any sense to anything. He goes describe a 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian political philosophy that advocated the violent destruction of social and political institutions to make way for a new society. This evil spirit has been long enough to get a name, nihilism.

Charles Krauthammer continues, “The worship of death and destruction is nihilism of a ferocity unlike any since the Nazis burned books, then art and then whole peoples. And that progression, once you stop and think about it, it doesn’t make sense but all of a sudden you can understand what was going on that when they began to burn books it was merely the first step in a process that ended up with burning whole peoples.” Continuing to quote Krauthammer, “Goebbels would have marveled at the recruitment tape for Al Qaeda; a two hour orgy of blood and death, image after image of brutalized Muslims shown in various poses of victimization followed by glorious of images of desecration of the infidel, mutilated American soldiers in Somalia, the destruction of the USS Cole, mangled bodies at the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and throughout the soundtrack endlessly repeats the refrain: with blood, with blood, with blood. Bin Laden appears then on the tape to counsel that the ‘Love of this world is wrong. You should love the other world. Die in the right cause and go to the other world.’ In his October 9<sup>th</sup> tape message, Al Qaeda spokesman Sulaiman Abu Ghaith gloried in the thousands of young people who look forward to death like the Americans look forward to living.” Beyond understanding isn’t it? It’s just completely out of our frame of reference. But we better learn to understand and to deal with it before it learns to deal with us. Think about that.

Krauthammer ties all this up in a final paragraph. He says, “Once again the world is faced with a transcendent conflict between those who love life and those who love death both for themselves and their enemies which is why we tremble. Upon witnessing the first atomic bomb explode at the Trinity site at Alamogordo, Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer recited a verse from the Hindu scripture, ‘Now I am become death; the destroyer of worlds.’ We tremble because for the first time in history, nihilism will soon be armed with the ultimate weapons of annihilation. For the first time in history, the nihilist will have the means to match his ends. Which is why the war declared upon us on September 11<sup>th</sup> is the most urgent, not only of our lives, but in the life of civilization itself.” No one could have put it plainer than this. Our thanks to Charles Krauthammer, writing the October 22<sup>nd</sup> *Weekly Standard* for making it clear. And it is frightening isn’t it? And we do well to be frightened. There is great evil afoot in the world. And it’s only natural to wonder, when you see this coming at us, if we’re approaching some of the terrible events of the end time mentioned in the book of Revelation. It’s possible. But let me introduce you to one of the players in the Book of Revelation.

In Revelation, John has a vision of a book with seven seals. As each one of these seals is opened, events begin to unfold which finally culminate at the end in the return of Christ and the Kingdom of God. The sequence is: seven seals are opened, the seventh and last of these seals introduces seven angels with seven trumpets who sound in sequence. And throughout these seven seals and seven trumpets some truly terrible and frightening events ensue, events which kill people in their millions, events which have not taken place yet although they are starting to look more and more reasonable with every day that passes. You know I don’t know what people thought generations ago who read these things because the means for these things taking place would have had to have been supernatural. Now we’re

coming to the place where it's not only possible and within the grasp of hateful people, some of them have it already in their hands.

It's the fifth of these trumpets that I want to call to your attention, not because I think we are there, but because it introduces you to the player I'm talking about. The reason I don't think we're necessarily there is because there are some truly horrendous things that happen before we get to this fifth angel and his trumpet. The passage of scripture is Revelation 9 and verse 1. "The fifth angel sounded his trumpet and I saw a star fall from heaven to the earth and to him was given the key to the bottomless pit." Bottomless pit conjures up all kinds of nasty images. The word is "the abyss." And this star falling from heaven with the key in his hand of the bottomless pit, he opens this abyss and a smoke comes roiling up out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. "And the sun and air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit; everything starts getting dark and black and brown. And out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth and to them was given power like scorpions of the earth have power."

Now let me stop here for just a minute. I don't think anyone would assume that John is talking about real locusts. These are something entirely different. John is in vision, it's like a dream and everything he is seeing is highly symbolic. What we're kind of wondering about are the events behind it. He is seeing something like locusts coming out of an abyss in the midst of all kinds of smoke and they have power like scorpions. "It was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass, no green thing, neither any tree, but only those men who have not the seal of God in their forehead. It was given that they should not kill these people but that they should be tormented for five months and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when he strikes a man. In those days men shall seek death and shall not find it and shall desire to die and death shall flee from them." Ah, well the sort of thing you look at and you wonder what on earth could he possibly have seen? Or what on earth could be the reality behind what he sees? Before this time, men have been killed, perhaps in their millions, now there's something that comes along that torments people for months on end; they want to die and death flees from them. The pain is so bad. "The shapes of the locusts were like horses prepared to battle and on their heads were crowns of gold and their faces, well they had faces like men." What a nightmare! "And they had hair like the hair of women and their teeth were like teeth of iron. And they had breastplates, like breastplates like plates of iron and the sound of their wings was like the sound of a whole hoard of chariots of many horses running to battle." What a roar they must have made. In verse 11 it says they had a king over them who is "the angel of the abyss" whose name in the Hebrew tongue is *Abaddon* and the Greek tongue has his name, Apollyon. One woe is past, behold there come two more woes after that.

Now it's frightening enough to think that there are two more after this that are like it but you've just been introduced to the angel of the bottomless pit, one called *Abaddon* or Apollyon. His name in both Hebrew and Greek means destroyer. That's what he is; the destroyer of life and everything else, that's all he is, it's all he stands for. There is no reason behind it. There's no meaning behind it other than destruction and death for the sake of

destruction and death. Now logically, when you come across this, the assumption is that this is Satan the devil. But you know, when you read in this in Revelation you could almost get the impression that this is another one. Not only do we have to deal with Satan, with the devil, now we have got another one on our hands who may be, in some ways, even worse. But what it does reveal to us is that there is another world out there, a spirit world, another dimension and, what you and I are unaware of, there is almost constant war in that world.

Jesus had this to say about Satan, He said to some people who were standing around Him, He said, "You are of your father the devil. The lust of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning. He didn't stay in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie he speaks of his own for he is a liar and the father of it." His two chief characteristics: he is a murderer and he is a liar and at his right hand there stands one who is the destroyer. Now that is an enemy to be afraid of.

Lest you think this stuff is all imaginary, let me assure you it's very real. Once upon a time there was man named Daniel. He was in captivity somewhere in the region of what we today would call Iraq or Iran and what, at that time, was the kingdom of Persia. And as he was in captivity there he prayed constantly to God. He was seeking the answer and asking for the answer to a particular question. He was fasting and praying for I think three weeks. At the end of that period of time, a bright angel showed up and spoke to him and his name was Michael. And he said, "Daniel, the very first day that you made this prayer your prayer was heard and I was sent to you. My problem was that the prince of Persia withstood me for three solid weeks." Completely out of sight of Daniel, completely unaware with Daniel, there was a fight going on between two beings that no one could see; Michael and the prince of Persia, whoever he was. In order for Michael to be able to get through to Daniel to be able to give him the message he had to help from another angel named Gabriel and they had a big war going on. Gabriel comes down and he fights and engages the prince of Persia which enables Michael to get into his area, his territory, to approach Daniel with the message that was sent to him. And he told Daniel, when he finished giving the message, "Now I've got to go back and we've got to fight with this one again and the only with me in this is Gabriel and we have a fight on our hands." Spiritual warfare, warfare out of our sight that is going on, perhaps even as you and I speak right now. There may well be war going on in the spirit realm at the same time there are bombings in Afghanistan and spreading Anthrax in this country; that there is a fight going on for the lives of human beings.

I'll give you an idea of what that battle is all about and where it goes at the very end time. It's not always easy to know exactly the timing of John's prophecies in Revelation but nevertheless, things stand out that we really should take careful note of. In Revelation 12, verse 7, for example, "There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon fought with his angels and prevailed not. And finally there place wasn't found anymore in heaven and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world, he was cast out on the earth and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, 'Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ for the

accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night. But they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony and they didn't love their lives to the death. So rejoice you heavens and those that dwell in them but woe to the inhabitants of the world of the earth and of the sea for the devil is come down to you having great wrath because he knows he has but a short time."

There's no way that this particular moment in history that we could define how that would work out or to be sure that that's what we are seeing because we have seen great eruptions of this same malignancy several times in the history of the world. It's been put back in its pit several times, the last and most noticeable with the death of Hitler and the destruction of the Nazis. But isn't it interesting that those people, the whole Nazi empire fought until they finally destroyed everything they could possibly destroy including their own country and their own people before they destroyed themselves. Death, blood and destruction were the entire objective of everything they were doing. We fought it and we won but it cost us terribly. No one knows how many people died in World War II. Estimates I have read different places range from 35 to 40 million. I think someone even estimated as many 60 million people died in World War II in the orgy of destruction unleashed by these powers at that time. We got it back into the pit that time but one of these times we will not get it back and it's going to require the return of Christ to save us. Is this the time? I don't know but what I can tell you it is the same thing Charles Krauthammer told us, "This time is more dangerous than anytime in the history of man because this time they are getting the ultimate weapons of destruction."

How does this all end? How does it come out? How does the story finish? Going further back in John's vision, chapter 19, verse 11, he begins to tell us how it's all going to play out. "I saw heaven opened," he said, "and look a white horse. And he that sat upon him was called faithful and true and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were like a flame of fire and on his head were many crowns and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. He was clothed in vesture dipped in blood and his name is called the Word of God. The armies in heaven followed him on white horses clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword that with he should smite the nations and rule them with a rod of iron and he treads the winepress with the fierceness and the wrath of Almighty God." Ooh, spooky stuff isn't it? Strong wording. But the image is all clear. Horses in the Bible are an icon for war. The sword is an icon for war and the smiting of the nations with a rod of iron. The thing that becomes clear to us, frankly, at last in history, is why it finally becomes necessary for Christ to intervene. Why He must fight this battle Himself, why we are no longer adequate to it. For if He didn't the end would be the destruction of all flesh. Jesus had told His disciples about talking about these end times and the things that would come to pass and all the destruction that would be wrought He said that, "Unless these days would be cut short, there would no flesh be saved alive." And now you can begin to understand with some of the crazy things people are doing how easily that could be done.

So while you and I watch television and worry about Anthrax spores and microwaving our mail when it comes in or using some form of radiation to get rid of spores in the mail, while we watch our boys bombing cities in Afghanistan and trying to find the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden in caves, there's probably another fight going on, out of sight, which may ultimately be the one that saves our life.

But I want to turn back now to how it ends. Revelation 20, verse 1, "I saw an angel come down from heaven having the key of that bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent which is the devil and Satan, he bound him for a thousand years and cast him into the bottomless pit, down into the abyss, and slammed the door shut on it, put the key in and locked it and set a seal on him that he could deceive the nations no more until the thousand years are fulfilled." After that, for some reason, he must be loosed for just a little season. It's going to end with victory. It's going to end with the devil, the destroyer, back in their pit and locked up. But we're not going to be the ones that put him there; Jesus Christ is going to do that. You see, in the end, we are the winners after all. But there are some terrible battles to be fought between now and then. We need to be sure that we are on the winning side.

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