

“Target Earth”

(Are we in the crosshairs of an asteroid?)

Back in 2004, Pauline Aguss was hanging out the washing in her garden in Lowerstoft, Suffolk, when suddenly she felt a sharp pain in her arm. A walnut-size rock made of brown metallic substance had hit her, causing a small but deep gash. As the rock fell during the peak of an annual meteor shower from the asteroid belt between Jupiter and Mars, she is believed to have become the first person in the country to have been hit by a meteorite. She may, however, not be the last as both Biblical and other research suggests that in the future we will see more falling matter from space....

Two or Three Witnesses

Let's begin with the Bible, our inspired authority. In Matthew 24, the Lord Jesus Christ said that, *“...the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”* (v29). We read a similar thing in Revelation 6, where it says, *“And the stars of the heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.”* (v13). Arguably, both these references sound like meteors/ asteroids falling during the Tribulation. Then there's Revelation 8, where we have two consecutive judgments which sound like scenes from the film, 'Deep Impact'. *“...And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea... And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood...”* (v8-11). From these references we can see that the earth will certainly be targeted by falling space matter during the seven years of God's wrath, if not before.

Science also recognises this as a reality, which is why Western governments have established the 'Spaceguard' program and the *Near Earth Asteroid Tracking system (NEAT)* on Maui, Hawaii - to scan the heavens for what they call, *PHA's* (Potentially Hazardous Asteroids). There are about 1215 PHAs being tracked by NASA at the time of writing, although it is impossible for them to see every threat that is coming our way. Apart from a limited field of vision for each site, the sun washes out half of the sky with daylight, and glare from the moon blinds observers to some 50% of threatening objects. Nevertheless, science believes in this.

And then there's history. Around the globe there are about 150 large craters from previous impacts, some of which are spectacularly large. These give evidence to the fact that Earth was hit in the distant past, perhaps during the judgment of the Flood. More recently, in 1908 an asteroid roughly 60 meters across was believed to be responsible for flattening trees over a 13 mile area in Tunguska, Siberia. Even the last decade saw a car-sized object labelled *2008 TC₃* explode over Sudan in October of that year, showering thousands of stone fragments across the desert. This one came as a real shock as it was only spotted 20 hours before impact. Fortunately there was no-one to evacuate in the desert, but in an urban

area it could have been far more serious. So, putting this all together, we can see that asteroid impacts appear to be a greater reality than most of us have given thought to. The Bible, science and history all point to their future occurrence.

Impact Scenarios

According to *Astronomy* magazine (May 2011), *“There is a fair chance, maybe one in three or four, that another Tunguska-like impact will happen this century, but it would likely occur over an ocean or a barren desert because a larger percentage of Earth’s area is either one of these environments rather than a city.”* However, if it did explode over a city the results could be devastating. Mark Henderson, Science Correspondent for *The Times (London)*, has written of the Tunguska incident: *“Had the impact been in the centre of London, everything inside the M25 would have been destroyed.”* A larger intruder could do even more damage, some even long term, to the environment. Henderson writes, *“If it landed in the Atlantic Ocean, everything within two miles would be vaporised and the east coast of the United States and the west coast of Europe would be swept by tidal waves. Molten debris would continue to rain down for weeks after the impact and dust particles would cause effects similar to a nuclear winter.”* Some scientists think that the penetration of the Earth’s atmosphere would also cause chemical reactions destroying the ozone layer. An enormous electromagnetic pulse (EMP) caused by the asteroid’s entrance might even disable electrical grids around the world, rendering communications and electrical equipment non-functional (*Astronomy magazine*). Basically, it would be horrendous. These speculations are in keeping with the Trumpet Judgments of Revelation 8, which are all poured out on the environment. The ‘mountain cast into the sea’ turns almost everything to blood and destroys sea life and shipping; the fallen star, Wormwood, makes the water bitter to drink (as its name suggests), leading to the death of all those who drink it. Warren Wiersbe has written, *“It is likely that this fallen star is molten and that, as it nears the earth it begins to disintegrate and fall into the various bodies of water.”* A significant judgment when you consider the Old Testament test for unfaithfulness was drinking bitter water (Num.5; Jer.9:14-15).

Nuclear Reactions

Actually, one of the surprising concerns scientists have of an incoming asteroid would be the instigation of a nuclear war. David Shiga, writing for *New Scientist*, makes this point. *“Now picture this ugly scenario, which worried some participants in the air force exercise [undertaken in the USA, Dec.2008 to test responses to an asteroid impact]: an asteroid flies out of nowhere and explodes over a sensitive nuclear-armed region, like South-East Asia or the Middle East. There’s a reasonable chance that such an airburst could be misinterpreted as a nuclear attack. Both produce a bright flash, a blast wave and raging winds.”* This is not as far fetched as it sounds. According to *The Daily Telegraph* (17/9/99), *“An explosion over the Pacific Ocean in 1976 assumed at the time to be a Chinese nuclear test, is now*

thought to have been such a comet attack.” This is why when 2008 TC₃ took place NASA alerted the US State Department, military commanders and White House officials to the potential problems of an asteroid exploding over or near the Middle East. They were concerned about it being misinterpreted as an attack from the West.

That brings us to another point about nuclear bombs. When people hear of the threat from incoming asteroids they sometimes make the assumption that we can just send up a nuclear tipped space rocket to nudge it away from earth – like they do in the films. Actually, such an option is not really open to us. For a start, nuclear weapons are forbidden in space by the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, signed by the USA, Russia, and other nuclear powers. But even if they were, asteroids weigh hundreds of thousands of tonnes, requiring an enormous push to change their trajectory. Detonating a bomb in space would not provide sufficient force so late in its journey towards Earth to make any difference. In fact, it could even make matters worse by breaking it into numerous pieces, creating a multiplied effect. *“Realistically, though, the nuclear option would not be on the table in the first place: the nuclear-tipped missiles sitting patiently in silos around the world are not designed to track and home in on an asteroid or even survive for more than a few minutes in space. Instead, we would simply have to brace ourselves for the impact.”* (New Scientist).

The biggest factor in any attempt to deflect an asteroid is time. To change its course sufficiently we would need to apply a means of gravitational pull years in advance – long before we could ever see it coming. At the moment this is impossible, which is why the *Spaceguard* program is so important, because it increases our only real response, - evacuation of endangered areas...providing we spot threats early enough. And there are plenty of ‘potentials.’ As the 17th century astronomer Johannes Kepler pointed out: *“There are more comets in the sky than fishes in the sea.”*

The Best Preparation

Like it or not, bad things are heading for Earth in the last days, and things are set to get worse before they get better. But even here God has a plan. Dr Tim La Haye believes that, *“world conditions of chaos”* are *“designed by God to lead people to Christ”*. Speaking of the Tribulation, which includes such scenarios as we have discussed, he says: *“This seven year period decreed by God is for the primary purpose of shaking human beings loose from a false sense of security. Then perhaps they may call on the name of the Lord just before the end of the age.”* (Revelation Unveiled, p141) It is important to realise that God is not targeting the Earth for destruction, so much as He is targeting it for salvation. *“As I live,” says the LORD GOD, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live...”* (Ezk.33:11). How much better to turn to Him today and be ready for that greater ‘incoming’ event, headed straight for the Earth, the rapture of the church, when the Lord Jesus comes for His people. May the Lord grant all of our readers grace to turn to Him, if they’ve not yet done so, *“and to wait for His Son from heaven...even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”* (1 Thess. 1:10).

- Jon Ikin
- *This article first appeared in "Prophetic Witness" magazine, over a year before the 2013 comet in Russia, which is why no mention of it is made in the article. An updated version may follow in due course.*