

Interview With Garry Clifford and Patricia Ryan of People Magazine

December 6, 1983

Prophecies of Armageddon

Q. Let me ask you a question out of that. In the Jerusalem Post you were quoted -- and I don't know if the quote was accurate -- as saying that this generation might see Armageddon, that a lot of the Biblical prophecies are sort of being played out today, or could be -- [inaudible].

The President. Where was that?

Q. In the Jerusalem Post. And I was going to say, is this really true? Do you believe that?

The President. I've never done that publicly. I have talked here, and then I wrote people, because some theologians quite some time ago were telling me, calling attention to the fact that theologians have been studying the ancient prophecies -- What would portend the coming of Armageddon? -- and have said that never, in the time between the prophecies up until now has there ever been a time in which so many of the prophecies are coming together. There have been times in the past when people thought the end of the world was coming, and so forth, but never anything like this.

And one of them, the first one who ever broached this to me -- and I won't use his name; I don't have permission to. He probably would give it, but I'm not going to ask -- had held a meeting with the then head of the German Government, years ago when the war was over, and did not know that his hobby was theology. And he asked this theologian what did he think was the next great news event, worldwide. And the theologian, very wisely, said, "Well, I think that you're asking that question in a case that you've had a thought along that line." And he did. It was about the prophecies and so forth.

So, no. I've talked conversationally about that.

Q. You've mused on it. You've considered it.

The President. [Laughing] Not to the extent of throwing up my hands and saying, "Well, it's all over." No. I think whichever generation and at whatever time, when the time comes, the generation that is there, I think will have to go on doing what they believe is right.

Q. Even if it comes?

The President. Yes.

Debate Between the President and Former Vice President Walter F. Mondale in Kansas City,
Missouri

October 21, 1984

Armageddon

Mr. Kalb. Mr. President, I'd like to pick up this Armageddon theme. You've been quoted as saying that you do believe, deep down, that we are heading for some kind of biblical Armageddon. Your Pentagon and your Secretary of Defense have plans for the United States to fight and prevail in a nuclear war. Do you feel that we are now heading perhaps, for some kind of nuclear Armageddon? And do you feel that this country and the world could survive that kind of calamity?

The President. Mr. Kalb, I think what has been hailed as something I'm supposedly, as President, discussing as principle is the recall of just some philosophical discussions with people who are interested in the same things; and that is the prophecies down through the years, the biblical prophecies of what would portend the coming of Armageddon, and so forth, and the fact that a number of theologians for the last decade or more have believed that this was true, that the prophecies are coming together that portend that. But no one knows whether Armageddon, those prophecies mean that Armageddon is a thousand years away or day after tomorrow. So, I have never seriously warned and said we must plan according to Armageddon.

Now, with regard to having to say whether we would try to survive in the event of a nuclear war, of course we would. But let me also point out that to several parliaments around the world, in Europe and in Asia, I have made a statement to each one of them, and I'll repeat it here: A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. And that is why we are maintaining a deterrent and trying to achieve a deterrent capacity to where no one would believe that they could start such a war and escape with limited damage.

But the deterrent -- and that's what it is for -- is also what led me to propose what is now being called the Star Wars concept, but propose that we research to see if there isn't a defensive weapon that could defend against incoming missiles. And if such a defense could be found, wouldn't it be far more humanitarian to say that now we can defend against a nuclear war by destroying missiles instead of slaughtering millions of people?