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## Film: A 'Planet' Doomed

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WELL, our goose is cooked. According to the Bible, all manner of pestilence and destruction are due to come our way. And according to Orson Welles, who narrates most of "The Late Great Planet Earth," Armageddon may just possibly be right around the corner. As Mr. Welles explains it, with a wordiness meant to give us all a good scare, man is besieged by "perils that threaten to send him into the dark abyss of silence known as extinction."

What are these perils? You name it, and it's howling right outside the door. Atomic holocausts. Earthquakes. Floods. Famine. Killer bees. According to the film, the Bible cites every one of these things as part of the beginning of the end. You have to read between the lines, perhaps, but the movie is willing and eager to help you out on that score.

So the list of prophesied ills is expanded to include environmental pollution, a military crisis in the Middle East, transcendental meditation and the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. A number of scientists, many of them quite distinguished, are interviewed. They all agree that our prospects aren't good.

The efficacy of the film's scare tactics is minimized by its applying biblical predictions too generally, and almost cavalierly at times — the most memorable sequence shows a computer conducting a numerological analysis of various politicians' names, to figure out if Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan or Ted Kennedy is the Antichrist. And Hal Lindsey, who co-wrote the book upon which the film is based and who appears with Mr. Welles as a co-narrator, speaks coolly, almost enthusiastically, about the prospect of worldwide destruction.

Robert Amram, the director, begins the film with some brief dramatizations of biblical prophets, wearing cotton-candy beards and too much gray makeup as they purvey the bad news. The rest of the time, Mr. Amram uses stock footage of tanks, mushroom clouds, missiles being launched, troops marching, and Hollywood extras armed for battle in ancient Rome. His illustrations are no more convincing nor frightening than his grim but sketchy hypothesis.

*"The Late Great Planet Earth," which is rated PG ("Parental Guidance Suggested"), contains moderately gruesome newsreel shots of war being waged, and one brief scene featuring the Whore of Babylon.*

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