



Written by [James Heiser](#) on November 8, 2011

James Wesley Rawles' New Book: "Survivors"

The inherent political and economic instability of our present time has been the subject of many books, some of which are marketed as fiction, while others are presented as nonfiction. As is often the case in times of civilizational crisis, the authors of fiction may actually have a more realistic understanding of the actual "facts on the ground" — and the substantial causes of a civilization's woes — than is presented by the self-described political elite in their purportedly factual writings. Thus, for example, historians may wear themselves out debating the historical accuracy of speeches recorded by Herodotus or Thucydides — what actually matters the most, to the modern reader, is that such speeches present him with an opportunity to reflect upon the Permanent Things.



James Wesley Rawles is certainly no Thucydides, but his "fiction" offers a vision of the chaos which may soon descend on American society with a closer conformity to the reality than that which is served up by the Pollyannas all along the [Northeast corridor](#) who are busy pushing a dream of permanent prosperity on the news networks. And Rawles does not offer his readers a bleak picture of a once-great nation's descent into darkness and anarchy; his writings are full of guidance for those readers who are willing to make preparations to preserve a future for themselves and their families.

Survivors: A Novel of the Coming Collapse is the second volume in Rawles' series of novels about the coming collapse of American society — and the global economy. *Survivors* — like his previous novel, *Patriots* — is set in the very near future, in a time which Rawles calls "The Crunch." The Crunch is the time in which the all the "bills" of living in a post-industrial, post-agricultural nation built on fiat money have "come due." With the vast majority of its citizens addicted to the unsustainable, post-modern "American way of life" — a life defined by an ignorance of actual life skills, unsustainable reliance of easy credit and a government committed to what is essentially "cradle-to-grave" government programs — the inevitable collapse of the Federal Reserve's essentially worthless script leads to hyperinflation and the steady collapse of the "just in time" infrastructure essential to life in a consumer economy defined by "big box" stores. As American society quickly unravels under the stresses unleashed by currency devaluation, criminal gangs and various contending factions of the former governmental structure contend for legitimacy and power in the midst of the chaos. Rawles' presentation of the "Provisional Government" of "president pro tempore" Maynard Hutchings demonstrates the author's awareness of how tyrants behave when seeking to solidify their power: Hutchings causes a "large number of conservative members of Congress" to simply disappear, invites in U.N. peacekeeping forces, and establishes his own fiat currency by force of arms, even as he confiscates all weaponry which might be used to resist his illegitimate rule.



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The primary character in *Survivors* is Andrew Laine, a young Army officer serving in Afghanistan at the beginning of the novel. The flow of the entire book is woven around largely around Laine's effort to return to his family — and fiancée — in New Mexico after the Crunch has caused such a profound collapse in the infrastructure of the U.S. Armed Forces that Laine is left to his own devices to return home. Rawles' presentation of Laine's travels and travails is compelling, and certainly presents a courageous military officer in a light rarely seen in popular media: A committed Christian, Laine's strives to uphold his moral standards in circumstances that are often quite challenging; he does not refrain from such violence as is necessary to preserve his own life, and the lives of others who are threatened by thugs or pirates.

It is worth noting that Rawles carefully avoids obscenities and blasphemy throughout *Survivors* — which is certainly a refreshing break from what has become commonplace in modern society. Sexual immorality is also absent from the pages of *Survivors*. In short, Rawles avoids the cheap thrills to which many writers succumb. Various characters directly cite and allude to passages from the Bible; Rawles' use of such passages serves the plot and dialog. It should also be noted that each chapter begins with a citation from a wide variety of statesmen, poets, philosophers and other writers; many of these citations are so apropos that the reader is left wishing Rawles had provided specific references for more of the quotations.

Elements of the plot of *Survivors* are clearly developed to lead to further volumes in the series. Keeping track of the rather extensive list of characters is aided by inclusion of a list of *Dramatis Personae*; readers may find themselves consulting this list of 60 named characters, as they will also benefit from the author's ten page glossary, which allows readers to traverse the "alphabet soup" of acronyms drawn from military, shortwave and other specialized communities.

In short, Rawles' *Survivors* is well worth reading; astute readers may find themselves making notes of passages pertaining to survival planning which will be worth returning to once one has finished reading the novel. For readers who find themselves motivated to move from the realm of "fiction" to actually preparing for a wide variety of natural or manmade disasters —include one such as the Crunch — a good resource by Rawles is his nonfiction book published in 2009, *How to Survive the End of the World as we Know It*. Rawles' new novel is well-written and informative, and speaks with an honesty and bluntness often missing from the policy prognostications of the political elite.

James Wesley Rawles, *Survivors: A Novel of the Coming Collapse*, (New York: Atria Books, 2011) hardcover, 382 pages. \$24.00



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