

Will the World End in 2012? A Look at Nostradamus, the Mayans and the Bible When Will It End?

by Senior Pastor: Bill Couch
Copyright © 2011, Bill Couch. All rights reserved worldwide.
This material may be printed or copied for personal use only.

Several people have asked me what I thought about the predictions that the world will end in 2012. This has been a concern especially of some young persons. In this series we will look at these predictions and what the Bible says about when the world will end. Next week we will look at what the whole world is really waiting for regarding the end of history. The following week we will look at what the Bible says about the resurrection of our bodies and heaven.

Let's take a look at one of the passages where Jesus spoke about the end times.

Matthew 24:29-36

"Immediately after the distress of those days

" 'the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

³⁰"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³²"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

³⁶"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

VIDEO: MOVIE CLIP 2012 APOCALYPSE

Will the world end on 12-21-2012? Let me just give you the conclusion of my message right now: I don't know. This is the shortest sermon I've ever preached. I guess we can go to an early brunch or lunch! But if you would like to hear how I got to that conclusion of course, I will be glad to explain!

The media has led us to believe that the Mayans and Nostradamus agree that the world will end in 2012. It makes for great articles and movies. When I researched the origins of these predictions I was surprised to discover that neither the Mayans nor Nostradamus predicted the end of the world in 2012—at least not exactly. The Mayans' long count calendar ends on the winter solstice, December 21, 2012. Their calendar spans over 5,000 years and its conclusion was of great importance to the Mayans. The end of this calendar meant the end of an age! However, the Mayan calendar itself does not indicate the end of the world, just the end of an age—with a new beginning the following day. It would reset the calendar for a new age beginning with 0.0.0.0! The Mayans believed that some great event would inaugurate a new age, but they did not think of it as a doomsday event.

Nostradamus was a physician and astrologer who lived in the 1500's in France. He made over 1,000 predictions many of which are compiled in a book entitled, Centuries of Prophecies. He predicted so much stuff that almost nothing of significance happens without one of his proponents claiming that Nostradamus predicted it. Here is the prediction cited most often regarding the possible end of the world in 2012:

After a great misery of mankind, an even greater approaches. The great cycle of the centuries renewed, it will rain blood, milk, famine, war, disease. In the sky will be seen a great fire dragging a trail of sparks.

It sounds as if he is predicting the end of the world caused by a collision of the earth with a comet or asteroid. The Mayans believed at the end of the age there would be an alignment of the stars. So you put those two predictions together and poof you have a date for the end of the world. Unfortunately the same quote from Nostradamus was used by those who predicted the end of the world in Y2K. When predictions are appropriately vague, they can be applied to many scenarios.

Sometimes Christian pastors get caught up in the predictions. Hal Lindsey wrote a book entitled The Late, Great Planet Earth in 1970 in which he predicted that the world would end in 1988. So far, he has missed it by 23 years.

Perhaps you have seen this billboard in town announcing that the last day you can go to heaven will occur on May 21 of this year. I looked at their website and this is their prediction: *“God will close the door to salvation on May 21, 2011, when He returns to take his elect children to heaven and begins the day of Judgment on earth for all of those left behind until October 21, 2011 when He will destroy the world and all that is therein.”*

People get nervous when the Middle East gets stirred up as it is right now in Egypt, Syria and Yemen. The news is also saturated with devastating natural disasters like the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, all the flooding and droughts occurring simultaneously, and predictions of more than usual hurricanes this fall. Is the world approaching the end?

What is our fascination with knowing when the world will end? I think part of it stems from our need to control everything. The plot of the movie 2012 involves building “arks” that will save a fraction of the human race from another worldwide flood. If we can predict the end, we think our technology can save us or at least some of us. So we want to know “what and when” with the hope that we can avoid it or escape it. It is all about our need to control everything—even the end of the world!

Jesus made it clear that we should not dwell on the unknowable or the uncontrollable. "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." When Jesus dwelled on this earth, he did not know the date of the end of the world. The angels don't know. Why would the Mayans or

Nostradamus know something that Jesus did not know? We cannot control the end of the world. Only the Father can. We need to give up the controls to him! When the end comes it will be cataclysmic and global in proportions. The sun and the moon will go dark. Jesus will return on the clouds for all to see. There will be no escaping it.

Another reason we focus on end times is due to fear. Another fear we have is that we are not ready to meet God. We have delayed giving our lives to God, because we want to be in charge. We are afraid that if we give our lives to God, he will spoil all our fun and make us do things we don't want to do. If we know when the end is coming, then we can wait until the last possible minute to give our lives to God. We can do what we want to here and now and slide into heaven just in time. What a sad view of God. God is a God who loves us and wants the very best for us. He is eager to give us abundant and eternal life as a gift now. He wants us to experience a love relationship with him now. Far from spoiling our fun, he will give us lives full of adventure, meaning and significance.

Of course the reality is that the end of our days on this planet may come long before the end of the world. Every day this world comes to an end for thousands of people. We should not concern ourselves with determining the date of the end of the world. Jesus has made it clear: it is none of our business. It is God's business to determine the date. We need to be concerned with our relationship with God and being ready all the time; so that when the end comes for each of us, we are ready to be with the Lord forever.

What we need to know is that the Bible tells us that the world as we know it will come to an end someday. Jesus taught his disciples to live with a sense of expectancy that it could come at any time. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the

day or the hour.” (Matthew 25:13) Jesus wanted them to anticipate the end in a positive way. When the end of this world comes, there will be a new heaven and a new earth. God is going to restore creation to what he intended it to be—a place where there is no suffering, no tears, no disease, no violence, no death! That is something to look forward to, not to dread.

Suffering will be amplified near the end because evil will give its best shot to destroy the world with one last desperate attempt. The Book of Revelation was written to persons who were experiencing terrible suffering, persecutions, torture and death at the hands of the Romans. The Book of Revelation is a picture. At the center of the picture is the triumphant Christ returning to earth to bring in his Kingdom. In the background behind him you can see evil and suffering, but it is only in the background of the picture. It is real. It is there. But it does not prevail. To persons being burned alive, the Book of Revelation gave them a picture of a triumphant Christ returning to earth and eliminating all suffering. They knew that though they were enduring agonizing pain for a while, soon they would be in a place where there would be no more pain.

The proclamations of the prophecies about the end of the world are primarily to let us know who wins! The victory is already certain. In 1989 a group of students sparked the velvet revolution that overthrew the communist government in the Czech Republic. These students began shouting, “You have lost already! You have lost already.” The communists were still in power, but the students knew their days were numbered.

That is our chant to Satan and all his forces of evil in the world. “You have lost already.” Even when it seems evil has the upper hand, whether in the world at large or in our individual lives, God is in control. Jesus is victorious.

The Kingdom of God is coming in its fullness after the end of this world. In fact God is working now to establish his Kingdom on earth as it is heaven. Rather than calculating when the end will occur, our responsibility is to join with God in his work of redeeming and restoring this world now. Isaiah describes this new world with these words:

The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.

⁷The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

⁸The infant will play near the hole of the cobra,
and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.

⁹They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:6-9

The end of this world is nothing to fear. Because it means that the glorious Kingdom of God is near. Are you ready for his Kingdom to come?