

# EASTER SUNDAY

## 2007

### SCOFF FLAWS

**2 Peter 3:3** ...scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,

**2 Peter 3:4** and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation."

**2 Peter 3:8** But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

**2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

#### Introduction

Over two hundred dates on which the end of the world was predicted have come and gone. Some seemed plausible at the time. In 1981 we were made aware of the "Jupiter Effect," a planetary alignment that occurs every one-hundred seventy-nine years. It was supposed to cause massive earthquakes that would decimate our planet.

#### *It didn't!*

The weirdest prediction I could find was in 1996. California psychic Sheldon Nidle predicted the end would come when sixteen-million space ships converged upon the Earth on December 17, 1996, along with a host of angels. Nidle explained the passing of the date by claiming the angles placed us in a holographic projection to preserve us and give us a second chance.

The next dates we have to look forward to are late in 2012 when both the Aztec and Mayan calendars predict the end of the age.

Movies like *Armageddon*, *The Day After Tomorrow*, and *Deep Impact* used hi-tech special effects to create various doomsday scenarios. In all of them the end of the world brings out the best in us as a race and we somehow find a way to explode the asteroid hurtling towards us or reverse the effects of global warming.

Is it any wonder that when Christians try to discuss the return of Jesus Christ and the end of the world they are met with scoffing?

We go way beyond the end of the world. We've been telling people for the past two-thousand years that Jesus Christ could return at any moment.

**Where is the promise of His coming?** It's a reasonable question. If you are asking it, I hope to answer it, and in a way that will lead you to consider whether or not you are ready to meet the Lord when He comes.

The apostle Peter asked and then answered the question of the scoffers in the verses from the Bible we read a moment ago.

**2 Peter 3:8** But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

God's relationship to time is different than ours. God might do in a thousand years what I might want Him to do in a day, and vice-versa. The two thousand years between the resurrection of Jesus and today is like two days to God.

That being understood, it is still reasonable to ask, **Where is the promise of His coming?** It is reasonable because if Jesus is really coming and the end of the world is drawing near there should be signs we can identify in the world around us.

There **are** such signs.

**Where is the promise of His coming?** It is in the existence of the nation of Israel. There are literally hundreds of prophecies in the Bible about Jerusalem and the land and people of Israel. These prophecies were pronounced thousands of years ago by men who

claimed that God was speaking through them. Their fulfillment in detail centuries later provides irrefutable proof that God exists and is working in human history.

Listen to a few of the prophecies about Israel being scattered then regathered in her promised land:

**Deuteronomy 4:27** And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you.

**Deuteronomy 28:64** "Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other..."

**Isaiah 43:5** Fear not, for I *am* with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, And gather you from the west;

**Isaiah 43:6** I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!' Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth

**Jeremiah 31:8** Behold, I will bring them from the north country, And gather them from the ends of the earth...

**Jeremiah 31:10** "Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, And declare *it* in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, And keep him as a shepherd *does* his flock.'

On May 14, 1948, against all possibility, Israel miraculously became a nation again in her promised land. The prophet Isaiah said,

**Isaiah 66:8** Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? *Or* shall a nation be born at once?

From that day in 1948 until today Israel has been fulfilling another centuries old prophecy:

**Zechariah 12:2** "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem.

**Zechariah 12:3** And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.

The existence of Israel as a nation in her land and the global stress it has caused and is causing is proof of the promise of Jesus Christ's coming and the end of the world.

**Where is the promise of His coming?** It is in the aligning of specific nations against Israel. Twenty-five hundred years ago the prophet Ezekiel wrote:

**Ezekiel 38:2** "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him,

**Ezekiel 38:3** and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I *am* against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.

**Ezekiel 38:4** I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company *with* bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords.

**Ezekiel 38:5** Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them *with* shield and helmet;

**Ezekiel 38:6** Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah *from* the far north and all its troops—many people *are* with you.

OK, I admit the names sound odd. You're not going to find **Magog** with your on-board GPS unit! But some of the nations are more common, such as Ethiopia and Libya. And one in particular is easily enough identified. Ancient **Persia** is modern-day Iran.

God's Word has a lot to say about Persia. The words *Persia*, *Persian*, or *Persians* appear some thirty-five times in the Old Testament. **Thirty-four of those references have been historically fulfilled!**

If the thirty-four references have already been fulfilled... Then so will the thirty-fifth.

That thirty-fifth reference is what we read in Ezekiel 38:5 which describes Iran in a coalition of nations that will invade Israel in the latter days. It is a twenty-five hundred year-old prophecy that is coming true before our very eyes.

Let me read you a series of quotes:

"No doubt the new wave [of attacks] in Palestine will soon wipe off this disgraceful blot [Israel] from the face of the Islamic world."

"The establishment of the Zionist regime was a move by the world oppressor against the Islamic world."

"The Islamic [community] will not allow its historic enemy to live in its heartland."

“The Zionist regime is on the road to being eliminated.”

“The regime that is occupying Jerusalem must be wiped from the map.”

These are a small sampling of the rhetoric of the world’s most blatantly anti-Semitic leader, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (mah**MOOD** ah-mah-dih-nee-**ZHAHD**), President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As recently as August of 2006 Ahmadinejad (ah-mah-dih-nee-**ZHAHD**) said to Muslim leaders, “the main solution is for the elimination” of Israel.

The alignment of nations against Israel, and especially Iran’s rise to prominence, is proof of the promise of Jesus Christ’s coming and the end of the world

**Where is the promise of His coming?** It is in the incredible technological advances of recent decades. One of the most well-known prophecies of the Bible is the dreaded Mark of the Beast. It derives from a prophecy in the Book of Revelation, penned by the apostle John in the first century. It reads,

**Revelation 13:16** He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

**Revelation 13:17** and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

**Revelation 13:18** Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

Notice just two of the fantastic predictions:

1. No one in the world will be able to buy or sell anything without this mark.
2. The mark will be something on your person, whether your hand or forehead.

It’s only in our lifetime that any of this could be possible. Today we have true global commerce. Through the internet and other means you can buy or sell and conduct all kinds of business in real time all over the world. The technology has existed now for several years to put your personal financial information on a microchip that can be inserted on your person under the skin. Your hand, if it has such a

chip implanted, is your credit card and ATM. You simply run it by the scanner and you're done.

Some of you may already have a chip and not know it. The *Safe Medical Devices Act*, which became a law in 1990, requires U.S. manufacturers of implants and medical devices to adopt a method for identifying and tracking their products permanently implanted in humans and to keep track of the recipients in case malfunctions arise. Breast implants, pacemakers, replacement heart valves and prosthetic devices implanted in millions worldwide are all to be tracked. And one of the methods used to track these devices is implanting microchips which store data about the manufacturer, the surgeon and the date of implant.

Or maybe it won't involve a chip at all but biometrics instead. Snowflake Technologies in Memphis is in the process of developing a device that can identify a person by the patterns of veins in the hand. Every person has a unique vein pattern – even identical twins. You simply wave your hand to buy, sell, open and start your car, and anything else you can think of. Unlike other biometric information, like fingerprints and retinal scans, vein patterns cannot be altered. They cannot be stolen because blood must be pumping through your veins for it to work. The device to read your veins will be ready in 2008.

- being changed to bring change -  
These popular technologies, by far, are my favorite proof we are living in the last days. The words John wrote two-thousand years ago were among the most far-fetched of all the prophecies in the Bible... **Until just recently.** Now there is little doubt we will soon conduct business just as he said we would.

**There are serious flaws with scoffing about the promise of Jesus Christ's coming. Any rational, intelligent person has to admit that Bible prophecy is being fulfilled to the letter right before our eyes.**

We will continue to read about developments in the Middle East and in technology with interest. But there is one event in prophecy that could occur at any moment and without any warning. It is the Rapture of the Church.

**1 Thessalonians 4:16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

**1 Thessalonians 4:17** Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

*Some of you may never die!* A generation of Christians will be alive and caught-up to be with Jesus at the Rapture having never experienced death. Instead,

**1 Corinthians 15:51** Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed –

**1 Corinthians 15:52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Why the delay?

You. You are the reason for the delay. Where would **you** be spiritually if Jesus had returned to Rapture the Church twenty years ago? Ten years ago? Five years ago? Last year?

For some of you who may not yet be saved: Where will you be if Jesus returns to Rapture His Church *right now*?

**2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

What we see as God's delay is really His longsuffering with sinners. Every day He waits, more souls are won to Jesus. Heaven gets new citizens and Hell gets more vacancies!

Yes, I said Hell. Hell is a real place. God doesn't send you there. It is the default destination of all those who refuse God's offer of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Maybe you heard about the elderly couple who planned their vacation in Miami, Florida. At the last minute the wife had to stay behind one day. When her husband arrived he decided to send his wife an e-mail. He thought he knew her address by heart, but he missed it by one letter. Instead of sending it to his wife it was received by a woman who had just lost her husband. The grieving widow

opened the e-mail, read it, and promptly fainted! When her family rushed to her aid and looked at the monitor, this is what it said: "Darling. Just arrived. See **you** tomorrow! And boy is it hot down here!"

You don't want to go to Hell. Neither do you want to be left behind after the Church is taken to Heaven. Once the Church is removed, a seven-year countdown begins towards the real Armageddon. It is called the Great Tribulation and it will be like Hell on earth. It is then, during that time, you will be forced to either take the Mark of the Beast or perish.

Want to take your chances in the Great Tribulation? Even if you can get away to the hills, you won't be able to hide. The headlines will contain some of the following items:

1. Cold war, followed by actual war.
2. Widespread death by war from famine.
3. The most violent earthquake ever known.
4. Great disturbances in the stellar heavens.
5. 1/3 of the earth's vegetation destroyed.
6. 1/3 of the earth's ocean life destroyed.
7. 1/3 of the earth's fresh water fish destroyed.
8. 1/3 of the sun, moon, and stars darkened.
9. A hellish invasion of the earth by demons who torment the inhabitants of the earth.
10. Hailstorms that destroy 1/3 of the earth's trees and grass.
11. Greater hailstorms, with hailstones that weigh 125 pounds Each.
12. A plague of terrible sores upon human beings.
13. The total poisoning of all the earth's fresh water.
14. The total poisoning of all the earth's salt water.

Speaking of headlines... I learned something new this week. I almost didn't believe it but verified it from several original sources. The largest headline type used in newspapers for especially dramatic events is 72-point. But some papers also have a 118-point type and they call it (are you ready) "Second Coming type."

**You do not want to experience Hell either on earth or after death.**  
You don't have to. God has been longsuffering with you. He's been waiting for you until right now.



