

# Is It the End of the End of the World?

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Easter Sunday 2009

## Introduction

Think back with me to the year 2000. There was a lot of hype regarding the new millennium. The mainstream magazine Newsweek ran an article titled, *Prophecy: What the Bible Says About the End of the World*.<sup>1</sup> According to their polling data,

Forty percent of all Americans and 45% of Christians believe that the world will end, as the Bible predicts, in a battle at Armageddon between Jesus and the Antichrist... Fully, 71% of Evangelical Protestants, but only 28% of non-Evangelical Protestants and 18% of Catholics share that view.

In the poll, large majorities of believers in the second coming of Christ believed that current events such as natural disasters (83%), epidemics like AIDS and Ebola (66%) and outbreaks of violence like shootings (62%), are a sign that it will happen soon.

Almost half of believers in the Biblical prophecy of Armageddon (47%) thought the Antichrist was currently on earth, and 45 percent of them believed Jesus would return to Earth in their lifetime.

Fast-forward to today. According to a new study by LifeWay Research “only 11% of 1,600 people who participated in a survey on the topic said they agree with statement, “I believe that the world will end in my lifetime.” The polling data was discussed in a February 2009 article titled, *Most Americans Unconcerned About the End of the World*.<sup>2</sup>

It’s hard to compare the two polls since they asked different questions. Still it seems that there is a very sharp decline in the number of Americans who believe the world could end in their lifetime.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/10-24-1999/0001052001&EDATE=>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.opposingviews.com/articles/research-most-americans-unconcerned-about-end-of-the-world>

I've given my message this morning this title: *"Is it the End of the End of the World?"*

Today we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The last recorded words of Jesus in the Bible are these:

Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Revelation 22:12 "... behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, as He ascended into Heaven and his followers watched, they were told,

Acts 1:11 ... This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.

Jesus Christ, the Person who lived back in the first century, is coming back to earth a second time. You are here this morning to consider your relationship to Jesus.

Why should we believe the prophecies in the Bible? It's a reasonable question. *It has a reasonable answer!*

Approximately 2500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible. About 2000 of them have already been fulfilled to the letter - with no errors. Since the probability for any one of these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance averages less than one in ten and since the prophecies are for the most part independent of one another, the odds for all these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance without error is less than one in  $10^{2000}$  (1 with 2000 zeros written after it)!

The remaining 500 or so prophecies are yet future. Based on God's track record, it is reasonable to expect them to be fulfilled to the letter.

Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was itself a remarkable fulfillment of Bible prophecies. Among other things, He had to be born of a virgin in Bethlehem, live a perfect life, and ride into Jerusalem on a foal of a donkey *exactly* 173,880 days after the command to rebuild Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Artaxerxes. Incredible!

Using the modern science of probability in reference to eight such prophecies, we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is one in  $10^{17}$  (1 with 17 zeroes written after it).

It can be illustrated like this. Suppose that we mark a silver dollar and then we take  $10^{17}$  power silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up the one marked silver dollar on his first try.

What chance would he have of getting the right one? **Just the same chance that one man would fulfill eight Bible prophecies.**

**But Jesus didn't fulfill eight prophecies. He fulfilled sixty major prophecies and as many as two hundred and fifty others.**

OK, but how do we know that these times we are living in are really the last days? Haven't Christians been predicting the return of Jesus for many centuries?

Once, when talking about prophecy, Jesus told His followers, "when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near" (Luke 21:31). It indicates there will be trends and signs that tell us we are near the end.

Let me give you just two of them.

Everyone is at least somewhat familiar with the most ominous of these signs. It is the dreaded "mark of the beast" that will be demanded by a coming charismatic world leader. Even if you think Bible prophecy is totally bogus you've heard of this mark and you know that '666' is not an address you want to have.

Here is what the Bible actually says about that mark:

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.

This was written in the first century - two thousand years ago. It was written by hand on papyrus. Today we think of 'papyrus' as a font choice on our laptop! In the economy of the first century Roman soldiers were still paid in salt - *not* by direct transfers to their bank. A cashless, global economic system was beyond even science fiction.

Nevertheless the Bible predicted that in the last days of human history there would be a cashless economic system by which everyone could buy or sell with only a "mark" on their "right hand or forehead."

**We could do that today.** The technology to "mark" a person with either an imbedded microchip or a visible or invisible ink that can be read by remote scanners not only exists, it is in use. Most animals are chipped today. Many different classes of people are being chipped, either voluntarily or involuntarily. It's all coming together very rapidly in our lifetimes.

Verichip is one of the world's leaders in Radio Frequency Identification, or RFID, technology. Their website states they have "the world's first and only patented, FDA-cleared, human implantable RFID microchip." Their implantable chip is already in widespread use:

- It is being implanted in hospital patients to ensure they receive the correct treatment and medications.
- It is being implanted in infants, again in a hospital setting, so that they are properly id'd and so that they cannot be abducted.
- It is being implanted in the elderly for what they call "wander prevention."

Here is something I noticed recently. It's a little bit 'out there' but I think you'll find it fascinating. Companies spend bank on designing and developing a logo. The Verichip logo is a circle with a slit in the center.

**It looks a great deal like a serpent's eye!** Fascinating since this antichrist is in league with the devil, who is often associated with a serpent.



OK, that might be somewhat sensational - *even though it is true!* Here is something that is blatant. A company called e-Smart, in conjunction with Samsung, has developed a next generation smartcard. They've named it "**I AM.**" They've decided to take the name of God and use it for their cashless technology. Interesting since the coming antichrist will at some point claim to be God and demand to be worshipped.

*I'm not making this stuff up! Google it.*

I'm not saying RFID chipping is taking the mark of the beast. I am saying that for the first time in history, very recently and in our lifetimes, it is at least possible to see how this major yet unfulfilled Bible prophecy might be moved into the 'fulfilled' column.

By far the most telling sign we are living in the last days is the existence of the nation of Israel in her ancient land. After nearly two centuries of being scattered all over the world and severely persecuted, almost exterminated, the Jews returned to their homeland. It's a modern miracle.

**No less than ten Bible prophecies were fulfilled in 1948 when modern Israel was reborn.** Let me tell you about four of them:

1. In Amos 9:14-15, 2700 years ago, the prophet said that there would come a time when the exiles of Israel would again have Israel as their own land and that they would never be uprooted again. *Fulfilled!*
2. In Ezekiel 37:10-14, 2600 years ago, the prophet received a vision in which Israel was seen as a scattering of dried-up bones. In this vision, God told Ezekiel that the bones (Israel) would be brought back to life. *Fulfilled!* The Jews were brought back to the land and the country of Israel was brought back to life. Israel re-established sovereignty in 1948, a mere three years after the end of the Holocaust, during which the Nazis killed about one-third of the world's Jewish population.
3. In Isaiah 66:7-8 the prophet describes a woman giving birth before going into labor, and he speaks of a country being born in one day. *Fulfilled!* This prophecy accurately describes what happened on May 14, 1948 - when the Jews declared independence for Israel as a united and sovereign nation for the first time in 2900 years.
4. Zechariah 12:3 reads like this: "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.” *Fulfilled!* Just about every nation in the world **is** against Israel. Our nation is one of her few remaining allies - and that relationship seems to be deteriorating. What to do with Israel and Jerusalem in particular is something the entire world is weighing in on - **just as Zechariah said more than two centuries ago.**

Bible prophecy is not just interesting. It is life-altering.

I was living the good life, living large, in 1979. I had a great job that was promising me a great career. I was making a lot of money. I had a beautiful wife who was also in a great career making good money. We lived in a romantic cabin in a super spot in the San Bernardino mountains.

That was outwardly. Inwardly things were very different. I was a controlled drunk but losing control. My wife was a pot-head. Truth is, we hated each other. We moved to the cabin to try to save our two-year old marriage.

On a whim one day we went to see a movie. It was *The Late, Great Planet Earth*. It was sort of like the things I’ve been telling you today. It revealed how ancient Bible prophecies were being fulfilled to the letter in our lifetimes.

We were stunned. Pam was a backslidden Christian. She’d given her life to Jesus in church as a child but had turned her back on her Lord. I had a religious heritage of sorts but never understood anything about the Bible or Jesus.

Pam pretty much immediately gave her life back to the Lord. I was in a mental fog for a few days until a co-worker who had recently gotten saved led me in a prayer to ask Jesus to save me.

Pam was restored. I was born-again. We didn’t have to quit doing anything; God just took away the desires we had for alcohol and pot. We loved each other more than ever before.

Bible prophecy is true and coming true before our very eyes. These are unmistakably the last days spoken about in the Bible. The signs are all around you.

In October 2007 wildfires burned out of control in Southern California. More than half a million acres were burned. Seventeen hundred homes were destroyed. Saddest of all, twenty-two people lost their lives.

**Among the dead were those who heard the order to evacuate but refused, choosing to stay behind and defend their homes and property.**

Many of the remaining unfulfilled Bible prophecies are warnings of a terrible judgment that is coming upon planet earth and its inhabitants. One such passage reads like this:

1 Thessalonians 5:1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

1 Thessalonians 5:4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

That's quite a mouthful so let me summarize it. A terrible period of time is coming, called "the Day of the Lord." It is coming "like a thief" with "sudden destruction." It is a day of "wrath." It **will not** "overtake" Christians who are living in the "light" because they have "obtained salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." It **will** "come upon" non-Christians living in the "night" and "they shall not escape."

Think of it as an approaching fire. The order has been given to evacuate. Will you risk staying behind?

Our situation in 1979 when God warned us is similar to the situation you might be in today:

- I mentioned that a colleague of mine, a co-worker, was ready to help me when I needed it the most. He represents perhaps the majority of you here today. You have given your hearts and lives to Jesus. You've been growing in the Lord for months or years or decades. You understand the stakes and desire that God would use you more-and-more to share this

Good News with family and friends who are in the path of the coming firestorm. Don't grow weary in your well-doing! Don't become discouraged!

Pastor and author A.W. Tozer once said,

Flesh is composed of combustible materials. The Spirit is not. Thus, the flesh will burn, be consumed, and burn-out. The Spirit will not. Conclusion: Feed the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, serve by the Spirit.

In a moment I'm going to give you who are in this first category an opportunity to ask the Lord to fill you again with His Spirit.

- I mentioned that my wife, Pam, knew the Lord as a child but as not living to worship and please Him. Some of you may be in that condition. Call it backslidden, or nominal, or carnal; the description doesn't matter. You know you are not living to worship the Lord or to please Him - even though He saved you by going to the Cross and dying in your place. Then He rose from the dead to insure you that you would have all the power you need to live life the way it ought to be lived.

In a moment I'm going to give you an opportunity to repent and be restored.

- There may be in our midst a non-Christian or two or three. I was like that. I'd heard about God and Jesus but didn't see how they impacted my life - until I smelled the smoke and saw the approaching flames!

You are going to have an opportunity to ask the Lord into your life in a moment.