

# EASTER SUNDAY 2010

## *“Preppers”*

Mark 13:28-37

The end of the world has gone mainstream. Everyone wants to know if the ‘End is Near!’

- *Knowing* is the title of a 2009 sci-fi thriller that deals with mysterious coded messages predicting mounting catastrophic global disasters.
- The byline for the movie *2012* reads, “We were Warned.” An American geologist learns that neutrinos from a massive solar flare are causing the temperature of the Earth's core to increase rapidly. The world's heads-of-state begin a massive, secret project intended to ensure humanity survives. Approximately 400,000 people are chosen to board ships called "arks" that are constructed in the Himalayas
- The History Channel started the year by hosting what they called “Armageddon Week.” They featured a slew of programs dealing with predictions of the end of the world.
- There is a lot of talk about the year 2012. Part of the 2012 mystique stems from the stars. On the winter solstice in 2012, the sun will be aligned with the center of the Milky Way for the first time in about 26,000 years. No one knows what might happen although there are predictions that the magnetic poles of the earth might shift.
- Recently discovered drawings attributed to the French seer Nostradamus seem to concur with the 2012 date. They illustrate this alignment with the Milky Way taking place.
- The Mayan's were remarkable astronomers and mathematicians. Their calendar was only short two one-thousandths of a day per year. Their calendar ends on December 21st, 2012, the date of the alignment, and is believed by many to predict the end of the world.

- Medieval predictions attributed to Merlin and the Chinese oracle of the I Ching also suggest 2012 is the end of days.
- The Hopi Indians of the southwest United States have prophecies that concur with the end of the world in 2012.
- Michael Drosnin, author of *The Bible Code*, found a hidden message in the Pentateuch (the first five books in the Bible) that predicts that a comet will crash into the earth in 2012 and annihilate all life.
- Sir Isaac Newton was more optimistic. Renowned as the father of modern physics and astronomy, recently discovered documents show his secret passion for decoding Bible prophecy. He calculated a date of 2060 for the end of days.

Speaking of Newton, modern scientists have entered the discussion. Listen to this excerpt from an article in the *San Jose Examiner*:

Long scorned as “mysticism” and “parascience,” concern about the year 2012 has now surfaced in a mainstream NASA report on the potential impacts on human society of solar flares **anticipated to peak in 2012.**

Scientists are concerned because (and I quote),

According to a December 16, 2008 report NASA's THEMIS spacecraft has discovered a hole in earth's magnetic field which is 10 times as large as previously thought. The magnetosphere, which is designed to protect earth from the plasma of solar flares, now has a hole in it four times the size of the earth.

Meantime in suburbia we've seen the rise the Prepper Movement, or as some call it, 'Survivalism Lite.' Newsweek described them by saying,

Preppers are what you might call survivalism's Third Wave: regular people with jobs and homes whose are increasingly fearful about the future...

A British publication described them like this:

Preppers believe that it is better to be safe than sorry and that preparing for disaster – be it a hurricane or the end of civilization – makes sense.

Unlike the 1990s survivalists, preppers come from all backgrounds and live all over America. They are just as likely to be found in a suburb or downtown loft as a remote ranch in the mountains. Prepping networks, which have sprung up all over the country in the past few years, provide advice on how to prepare food reserves, how to grow crops in your garden, how to hunt and how to defend yourself. There are prepping books, online shops, radio shows, countless blogs, prepping courses and prepping conferences.

What are we to make of all this?

People are beginning to recognize that we **are** living in the End Times described in great detail in the Bible. Unlike the other sources, like Nostrodamus and Merlin, the Bible is always 100% accurate.

For example: It's Easter and Christians are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. How do we know that He is who He said He was - the Son of God and the Savior of the world?

Here's one way to know for sure. There are at least 191 prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of the Savior of the world. Those prophecies were written a minimum of 400 years before the birth of Jesus and, in most cases, thousands of years before. Nevertheless He fulfilled every one of them in perfect detail. The odds of one man fulfilling all those is beyond astronomical; it is impossible unless Jesus is Who He said He is - the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

The Bible has told us for centuries that history is moving towards an inevitable conclusion and the details are all laid-out for us on its pages.

Since it is, we really *should* be preppers - but not necessarily in the sense of surviving on the earth.

We should be preppers in the much greater sense of being prepared to meet the risen Lord.

After all, what good is it to gain the whole world if you lose your soul?

It's our intention today to be certain you are prepared for your inevitable meeting with Jesus. At the end of our service we will ask you to make a decision about Him. Your decision will determine your eternity.

The first followers of Jesus also wondered about the end of the world. They once took the opportunity to ask Him, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

Because they were seated on the Mount of Olives at the time, the answer Jesus gave them is called the Olivet Discourse. It's filled with information about the end of the age.

During that talk Jesus told some parables. A parable is a story that places one thing beside another for the purpose of teaching a spiritual truth. Two of them are found in the Gospel of Mark.

Mark 13:28 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.

Mark 13:29 "So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near; at the doors!

Mark 13:30 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

Mark 13:31 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

This is the Parable of the Fig Tree. In the Bible the fig tree is a symbol for the nation of Israel. In this parable, Jesus was addressing Jews.

But which Jews? In what time period?

Because of the resurgence in interest in the end of the world, most people are aware that the Bible predicts a seven year period of time called the Great Tribulation. It's described in graphic detail in chapters six through nineteen of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

What most people do not realize is that those seven years are especially a time during which God is focusing His efforts on the nation of Israel. Though the events affect the whole planet and everyone on it, God is acting in those years to reveal to His chosen people that Jesus Christ, whom they rejected in His first coming, is coming again.

When Jesus told the Parable of the Fig Tree, He was talking about the Jews who will be alive in the future seven-year Great Tribulation. They are the people He was referring to when He said, "this generation will by no

means pass away till all these things take place.” They will be able to see the signs and know His Second Coming at the end of those seven years is certain.

The return of the Jews to the Promised Land to reestablish their nation is one of the most significant prophetic events of all time. The fulfilled prophecies of God's dealings with the Jews are themselves enough to validate the Bible.

But we have a lot more reasons to believe we are living in the End Times just prior to the Great Tribulation:

- Two thousand years ago the Bible predicted that in the Great Tribulation the technology would exist to transact all business by means of a ‘mark’ on the hand or forehead. That technology now exists and is being utilized more-and-more everyday. When the time comes humans could easily be microchipped or RFID tagged or electronically tattooed.
- Twenty-five hundred years ago the Bible predicted that there would be an exponential explosion of human knowledge in the End Times. Ours is the only generation that has seen that exponential explosion of knowledge.

There are many other things we might point to that strongly suggest we are living in the End Times just prior to the Great Tribulation: the movement toward rebuilding the Temple of the Jews on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the steady push for a global system of government, the rise of the European Union as a superpower, and the alignment of nations gathered against Israel - nations like Russia and Iran and Libya listed by name 2500 years ago in the Book of Ezekiel.

If it's close, shouldn't we be prepping for the seven year Great Tribulation?

**The preparation for it is to get saved now!** Prior to the Great Tribulation God is calling to people from all nations to come into His household of faith, the church. If you answer that call you will be kept out from that terrible time.

The second parable, the Parable of the Householder, is addressed to everyone living prior to the start of the Great Tribulation. It is intended to challenge you to be ready and thus avoid the sufferings of that period of time.

Mark 13:32 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Mark 13:33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

Mark 13:34 "It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

Mark 13:35 "Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming; in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning;

Mark 13:36 "lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

Mark 13:37 "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

The clear emphasis of the parable is that the absent householder is definitely going to return and he could do so at any moment. We call that kind of coming 'imminent.'

Jesus is the householder Who has gone away. He is definitely coming back and it could be at any moment. That tells us this is a different coming, a different return, than the one at the end of the seven year Great Tribulation.

- Jesus' coming at the end of those seven years will be preceded by definite signs and it won't happen until those years and all their prophecies are fulfilled.
- This is another coming, a return at any moment.

This is the event the Bible calls the rapture of the church. It is described by these verses in the book of First Thessalonians.

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 the particulars of how we will be raised or raptured are found in First Corinthians fifteen.

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.

The resurrection and rapture will occur *before* the Great Tribulation begins, and all the believers of the church age - those who have died and those who are yet alive - will be caught up to Heaven to be with the Lord. In thinking about all the End Times fervor, you want to be sure you are part of the group that is taken to Heaven in the rapture.

You can be a prepper, or even a full-blown survivalist, but what good is it to gain a few more years on the earth only to be lost for eternity?

There *will* be folks who are left behind and who survive the horrors of the Great Tribulation. But if they are not saved by the end of those years, Jesus will say to them, “Depart from Me... I never knew you.”

Do you really want to take your chances living through the Great Tribulation? Most of those who turn to Jesus during those years will be martyred. It’s been said, and it’s true, that if you can’t live for Jesus now, during a time of grace, you won’t be able to die for Him then in the day of wrath.

### **Your preparation for the end of the world is to get saved!**

What must you do to be saved? It’s a question that was once asked the apostle Paul by his jailer. Paul’s answer was, “Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ.”

Notice there is no “doing” of anything in Paul’s answer. There was no rite to perform, no ritual, no religion at all. The jailer must believe on the Lord.

Have you done that? Have you believed on the Lord and been saved? If not, we’re going to give you a chance to believe on Jesus in a moment.

I suppose that the majority of us are saved. We’ve been born-again. Before we start praying for those here today who might not be saved, let’s examine ourselves and remember that we are called upon to remain serious.

The apostle Peter said to believers,

1 Peter 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Then he said,

2 Peter 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

2 Peter 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

2 Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Ask yourself, Am I rapture-ready? Am I mission-ready while I await the rapture? Or have I left my first love?

Let's pray!

