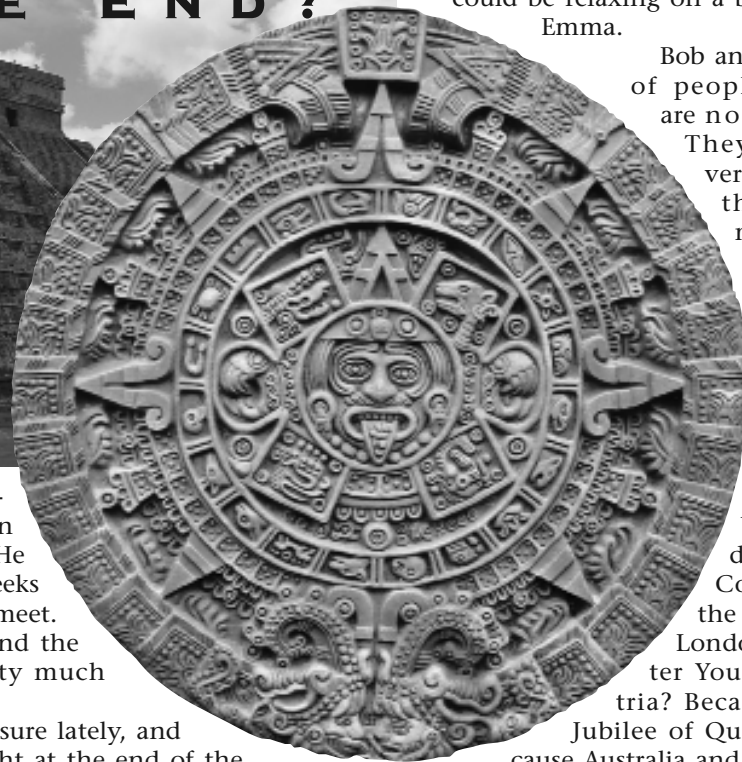


by Monte  
Wolverton

# 2012

## IS IT THE END?



He saw some kind of New Age guy on TV who said something about the Mayan calendar ending in 2012. Bob doesn't know where or when these Maya lived—maybe it was somewhere in India—but those ancient people could have known something we don't.

Bob is thinking he might cash in that retirement account and do something fun with it while there's still time. He might just put off that dental work—and maybe that colonoscopy the doctor says he needs and take a long vacation somewhere with Emma.

After all, if gurus and pastors alike are talking about 2012—there just might be something to it. Bob sees his workplace coming up on the right. Instead of turning into the parking lot, he guns his Taurus and heads toward the bank to find out about closing out his retirement account (penalties notwithstanding). By this time next week, he could be relaxing on a beach in Cancun with Emma.

Bob and Emma are like a lot of people. Bob and Emma are not “prophecy buffs.” They may not even be very “spiritual”—but all this talk about 2012 makes them more than a little bit anxious—and it may even cause them to make decisions they may later regret.

### The End Is Near?

The frenzy surrounding 2012 has been bubbling for nearly a decade. Why, you ask? Could it be because of the summer Olympics in London and the first Winter Youth Olympics in Austria? Because of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II? Because Australia and Ireland will switch to digital television broadcasts? Because Universal Studios will open a theme park in Korea? Because Ontario and Ottawa will phase out incandescent light bulbs?

No—while all of the above (and more) are scheduled to happen in 2012, none of these things are the cause of the current mania.

...scholars point out that classic Maya inscriptions make few if any predictions – and certainly none regarding the end of the world (and even if they had done so, why would their predictions hold any credibility?).

Some people are becoming hysterical because they are convinced that December 21, 2012 is the end of the world as we know it. Others—the Bobs and Emmas of the

**B**ob backs his 1987 Ford Taurus out of the driveway on the way to his second job. He started the job only a few weeks ago in a futile effort to make ends meet. His wife, Emma, needed surgery and the high deductible and co-pay pretty much wiped out their meager savings.

Bob has been under a lot of pressure lately, and right now he doesn't see much light at the end of the tunnel. He feels like he is on a treadmill—endlessly laboring but getting nowhere. Bob and Emma, both in their '50s, have a modest retirement account, but lately Bob wonders if they'll ever see retirement, what with the state of the economy, the nation and the world. The future looks bleak.

And then there's that thing about 2012. Heck—there may not even be a future. Not that Bob lends any credence to that kind of rumor. But still, he wonders.

While Bob has never been much of a church fan, Emma regularly goes to a church down the street. Her pastor says the Rapture and Tribulation could happen soon, maybe in December 2012. Bob isn't sure about the exact definition of those terms—but that kind of talk still makes him antsy.

world—may not be hysterical, but they are being influenced by the issue.

The insanity has been fueled by a series of books, articles, websites, assorted blogs and a popular motion picture. The delirium continues to grow. A recent search of “2012 books” on Amazon.com returned some 33 thousand results!

Just a few of the fascinating titles: *The Mystery of 2012: Predictions, Prophecies, and Possibilities*; *Apocalypse 2012: An Investigation into Civiliza-*

*tion's End*; *Planet X Forecast and 2012 Survival Guide*; *Apollyon Rising 2012: The Lost Symbol Found and the Final Mystery of the Great Seal Revealed*; *Aftermath: A Guide to Preparing For and Surviving Apocalypse 2012*; and of course *The Complete Idiot's Guide to 2012*.

### Hollywood Hype

A couple of years ago, as the fire of 2012 paranoia was spreading through our impressionable western culture, Hollywood did us the “favor” of pour-

ing gasoline on the flames with a sensational science fiction movie—2012.

In the movie, solar radiation causes the earth to heat up, with ensuing volcanic eruptions and earthquakes of unprecedented strength. As scientists see that the earth is about to be flooded, world leaders get together and create huge “arks” to save a remnant of the human race from annihilation. It works. The end. Sorry, I gave away the plot.

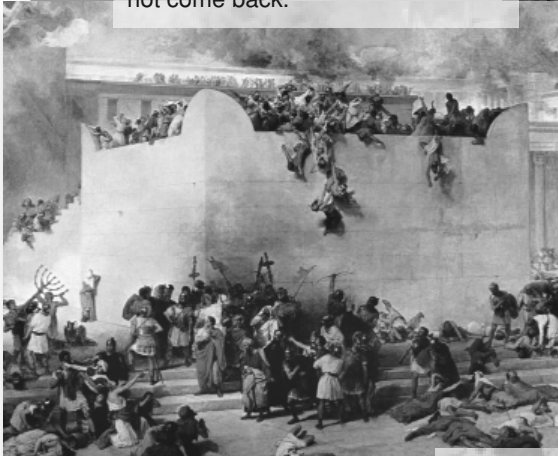
The problem wasn't the movie itself—hundreds of sci-fi flicks and TV

# THE END IS ALWAYS NEAR: A TIMELINE OF ABANDONED APOCALYPSES



**70**

First century Christians, expecting Christ's imminent return, are dismayed when Roman legions destroy Jerusalem, yet Jesus does not come back.



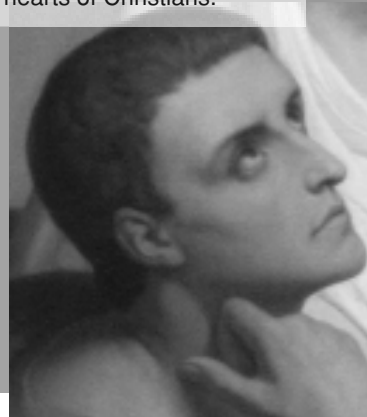
**c 420**

Augustine of Hippo rejects millennialism, explaining that the millennium is an allegory for the spiritual reign of Christ in the hearts of Christians.



**c 135**

In Asia Minor, Montanus proclaims that the New Jerusalem will soon descend from heaven in Phrygia. His isolationist movement, known as Montanism, spreads throughout the Christian world.



# We Don't Make This Stuff Up!

shows (most with far better stories) are screened every year without people taking them seriously and going off the deep end.

The problem was the unethical promotion of the movie. 2012's viral marketing campaign exploited end-times hysteria through a fictional organization called the "Institute for Human Continuity" with press releases, blogs, radio broadcasts and websites dedicated to further fanning the apocalyptic flames.

While the campaign was roundly criticized for its unscrupulous and deceptive tactics—and the film received mixed to negative reviews—that didn't stop the public from eating it up. It grossed nearly a billion dollars, including DVD revenues.

Of course the movie, as well as the misinformation disseminated in its slick promotional campaign, was fiction. Yet apparently many people had a tough time making this distinction. Scientists were bom-

The *Plain Truth* recently received a sincere notification of "the order in which the end time events will occur." The author invited us to "print off this list and keep it handy to test if this is true (and share it with as many as you care or dare to)."

Space does not permit reprinting the long list sent to us. However, here are some of its dogmatic claims about events predicted to take place soon:



**"The monumental collapse of the free western economies... The Euro will crash first (2011-2012) and then 2-3 weeks afterwards the dollar will do the same."**

**"Martial law will be enacted at this point, if it already hasn't been enacted prior for some other unforeseen event, like a massive cyber attack or a pandemic, for example."**

**"Ten global regions, with a leader placed over each will emerge from the chaos and the New World Order will be born."**

The author invited us to "share it with as many as you care or dare to"—we share an excerpt of these claims as a way of illustrating the irresponsible fear-mongering that is deeply embedded within some religious minds.

## c 600-700

The growth of Islam prompts European Christians to believe the end is near, and that Muhammad is the Antichrist.

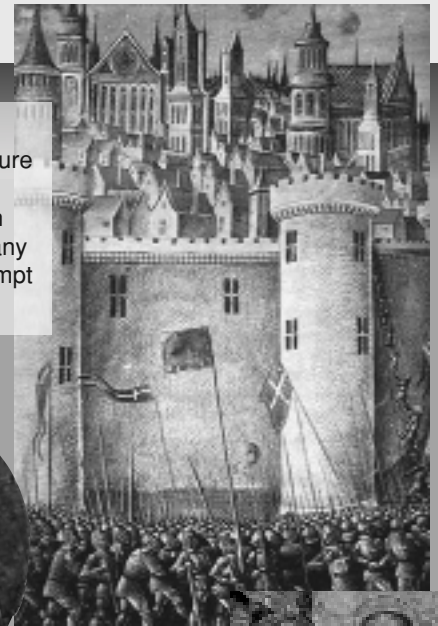


## c 990

Widespread famines, the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, a fire at St. Peter's and civil war in Rome are all taken as clear signs of "the end" by many Christians. Midnight, January 1, 1000 was seen as the likely time of Christ's return.

## 1099

Crusaders capture Jerusalem from the Muslims, an event which many believe will prompt Christ to return.



## 1066

The Norman conquest of England and the appearance of Haley's Comet convince many that the end is near.

## c 1200

Italian mystic and theologian Joachim sets the date of 1260 for the beginning of the "Age of the Spirit" or the Millennium.





...“apocalypse” is a Western concept that has little or nothing to do with Mayan beliefs. Rather, it is connected with American traditions such as the New Age movement and millenarianism.

had noticed that the Mesoamerican Long-Count calendar (probably invented by the Olmec and used by the classic Maya civilization) would complete its 13th minor numerical sub-cycle (*b'ak'tun*) in December of 2012—completing a period of roughly 5,125 years. This, however, was all based on debatable formulas and starting points.

As early as 1957, Mayanist and astronomer Maud Worcester Makemson asserted that “the completion of a Great Period of 13 *b'ak'tuns* would have been of

the utmost significance to the Maya.” In 1966, Michael D. Coe more ambitiously claimed in his book *The Maya* that “there is a suggestion...that Armageddon would overtake the degenerate peoples of the world and all creation on the final day of the thirteenth [b'ak'tun]. Thus...our present universe [would]

be annihilated [in December 2012] when the Great Cycle of the Long Count reaches completion.”

In the 1970s, several New Age authors speculated that December 2012 would mark a global “consciousness shift.” Mexican author José Argüelles claims that on that date, the earth will pass through a “great beam” emanating from the center of the galaxy.

With the publication of other books and articles over the years, these ideas caught on among those who seem to believe that primitive and blood-thirsty cultures (engineering and architectural advances notwithstanding) have special insight into the future.

**Given the right timing and circumstances, and without keeping a clear focus on faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone, it seems that nearly anyone can be taken in by some kind of religious scam.**

But several reputable scholars, such as Rosemary Joyce, professor of anthropology at UC Berkeley, tell us that the ancient Maya ascribed no significance to this date—other than their calendar rolling over in the distant future. They certainly did not think it was the end of the world, as they calculated the dates of festivals beyond this date. “There is nothing in the Maya or Aztec or ancient Mesoamerican prophecy to

barded by email questions from frantic people, wanting to know if the world is truly ending on December 21, 2012. One scientist reported that some teens told him they were contemplating suicide prior to that date.

### Over 50 Years of Arcane Speculation

Decades before the 2012 movie hit the movie screens, scholars



**c 1540**

Martin Luther predicts the church's final conflict against the Turks and the Pope.



**c 1560**

Nostradamus predicts that “The Great King of Terror” will come in 1999, triggering the destruction of the civilized world.



**1348**

As the plague kills a third of the population of Europe, prophets predict Christ's return within ten years.



**Christendom at large likes to believe it is not part of this extremist fringe.  
But unfortunately, that idea is an illusion.**

suggest that they prophesied a sudden or major change of any sort in 2012,” says Mayanist scholar Mark Van Stone. “The notion of a Great Cycle coming to an end is completely a modern invention.”

Other scholars point out that classic Maya inscriptions make few if any predictions—and certainly none regarding the end of the world (and even

Again, this particular piece of intelligence seems to have bypassed legitimate scholars. NASA scientist David Morrison reports that neither he nor his colleagues are aware of any such planet, much less an impending earth-shattering collision.

Are people just gullible—or ignorant—or both? Or, perhaps, as Will Rogers once said, “Everybody is ig-

**Sadly, a major source of 2012 rumor and misinformation is end-times Christendom. The Bobs and Emmas of the world are far more likely to accept such harebrained ideas—and act on them—if they believe them to be somehow biblical (which they are not).**

if they had done so, why would their predictions hold any credibility?).

Somewhat ironically, even the modern Maya lend no significance to the year 2012. Mayan elder Apolinario Chile Pixtun notes that “apocalypse” is a Western concept that has little or nothing to do with Mayan beliefs. Rather, it is connected with American traditions such as the New Age movement and millenarianism.

In spite of the facts, unsuspecting folks continue to gobble down the foolishness like a herd of hogs at slopping time. According to another theory, the earth will be blown to smithereens on December 21, 2012 by a collision with a “rogue planet” called “Nibiru” or “Planet X.”

norant, only on different subjects.” Maybe many otherwise intelligent people are ignorant when it comes to matters of faith—or what they will allow themselves to believe.

**Does it Really Matter?**

So what if a bunch of New Agers and other fringe eccentrics want to believe in Nibiru and the Mayan calendar? After all, don’t we live in a pluralistic society where anyone has the right to believe anything?

If we took a poll of North American beliefs and opinions regarding the “end time,” we would likely find such beliefs distributed in a classic bell-shaped curve. That is, a minority of people believe in a specific or imminent date for the end of the world, while on the other end of the curve



a minority of people absolutely reject the idea of any kind of apocalypse, whether brought about by God or humans. In the center of the curve is the broad majority of people—the Bobs and Emmas—who may allow their thinking and beliefs to be influenced by the purveyors of end-time hysteria.

Christendom at large likes to believe it is not part of this extremist fringe. But unfortunately, that idea is an illusion. The 2012 paranoia is not limited to Birkenstock-wearing, pony-tail-bedecked, crystal-stroking New Agers living in ashrams in the mountains north of Malibu, California.

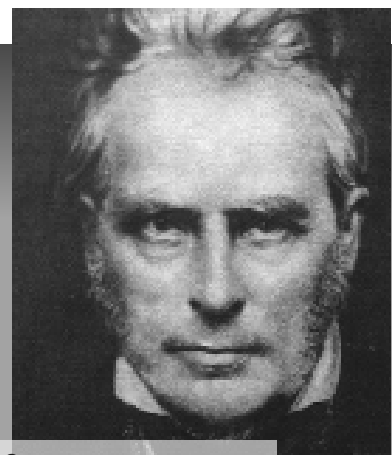
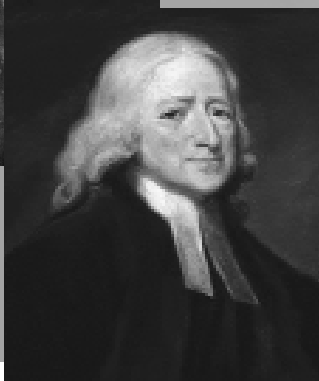
Sadly, a major source of 2012 misinformation is end-times Christendom. All the Bobs and Emmas of the world are far more likely to accept such harebrained ideas (and act on them) if they believe them to be somehow biblical (which they are not).



**1664**

The Great Plague of London kills 75,000, followed by the Great Fire of London. Christians believe these events portend the end.

**c 1760**  
Methodism founder John Wesley suggests 1836 as a date for Christ’s return.



**c 1830**

John Nelson Darby invents dispensationalism, asserting an imminent Rapture, Tribulation and Millennium.

The end-times... is one of religion's most effective tools to keep its followers in line...obeying its tyrannical rules....

The 2012 frenzy, and apocalypticism in general, is grounded in religious millenarianism (the idea of an end-times cataclysm or Great Tribulation followed by a utopian millennium).

Some go so far as to claim that Bible prophecy specifies 2012 as the date of the Rapture and the beginning of the Great Tribulation. As one "Christian" website fulminates, 2012 is "...a year fraught with meaning and prophetic importance. The course of world events and global troubles seems to have suddenly picked up speed and accelerated."

What, exactly, does that mean? How do events "accelerate"? And what kind of contemporary writer uses the word "fraught"?

Many "prophesy experts" in Christendom scoff at the 2012 date—while propounding a date of their own devising. Others, perhaps more shrewdly, leave the date open while continuing their alarmist preaching or writing that the Rapture and the Great Tribulation are just around the corner (witness the success of Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* series). You would think that after decades of such failed predictions, people would catch on. But history tells us that end-time prognostications have been thriving for nearly two thousand years (see "The End is Always Near: A Timeline of Abandoned Apocalypses") and few people seem to be the wiser.

Today, end-time preaching, publishing and movie-making is a huge part of the big business of Christendom.

**"End-Times" Teaching— Keeping People in Line?**

The fact is, there is absolutely no Bible prophecy that points to 2012 or any other date for the end of the world or the Rapture or the Second Coming of Christ or the beginning of the Tribulation. Most of the prophecies in the Old Testament that people wrongly apply to the "end-times" were fulfilled millennia ago, and many New Testament prophe-

**Two Case Studies in Failed End-Times Prediction**

**Elizabeth Clare Prophet**, who died in 2009, was the founder (along with her husband Mark Prophet, who died in 1973) of the Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT). CUT is a New Age group (related to Theosophy) which claims to receive teachings from a cadre of dead "Ascended Masters." Mark Prophet, allegedly now an Ascended Master himself, claimed to



have lived past lives as several notable figures, including Noah, Mark the Evangelist, Pharaoh Akhenaten, Louis XIV, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Sir Lancelot (that last figure is generally regarded as fictitious by reputable scholars, but what do they know?).

Prophet and his wife had grown up under the influence of various metaphysical philosophies, including Rosecrucianism, New Thought, Christian



Millerite prophetic time chart from 1843, about the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

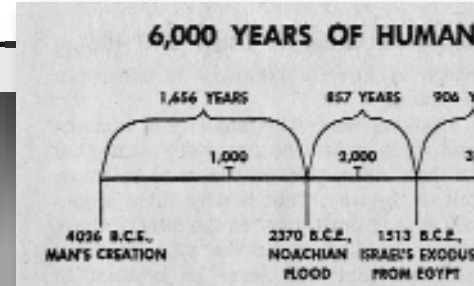
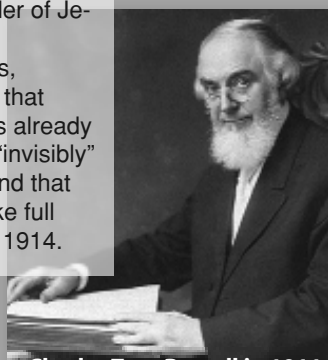


Chart showing end would come in 1975— Watchtower Society's magazine *Awake!*



William Miller, founder of Adventist movement

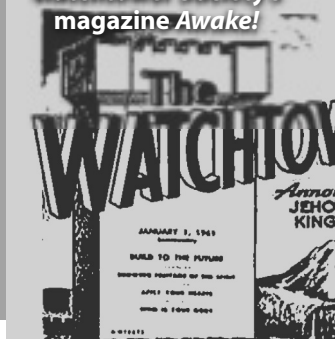
**c 1840**  
Adventist movement founder William Miller sets 1844 as the year of Jesus' return.



Charles Taze Russell in 1911

**c 1880**  
Charles Taze Russell, founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, preaches that Christ has already returned "invisibly" in 1874 and that he will take full control in 1914.

**1909**  
Cyrus Scofield publishes his Reference Bible, containing John Nelson Darby's dispensationalist scheme.



Science and the Self-Realization Fellowship.

Their original organization, founded as the Summit Lighthouse in Washington D.C., moved through several iterations and locations, including Colorado Springs and Pasadena, finally landing in Montana, where they planted the headquarters of the Church Universal and Triumphant.

Church members followed a long list of religious rules and regulations—most of these rules were supposedly given to Elizabeth in thousands of “dictations from the Ascended Masters.”

Members believed Elizabeth to be infallible, despite shortcomings, such as her fiery temper and the favoritism shown to her own family. As the church expanded, Elizabeth conducted conferences in Africa, attended by thousands. She also met with African heads of state.

In the late 1980s, Elizabeth predicted that nuclear war with Russia would break out on April 23, 1990, and urged CUT members to build fallout shelters and stock them with provisions. Of course, nuclear war did not happen, and the cost of building fallout shelters in addition to paying the required tithes had taken its toll on many church members, who were left heavily in debt or bankrupt.

Unfazed, Elizabeth explained that nuclear war had been narrowly averted by the prayers of her faithful followers. Not long afterward, it was discovered that her church (which purported to advocate peace and love) was using the

offerings of the faithful to amass a huge cache of weapons and ammunition—just in case.

Not surprisingly, church membership took a sudden drop. This should have been the welcome end of another religious cult.

Yet the church continues, with congregations in major U.S. cities and a growing international membership—in addition to several successful spinoff groups led by former church officials.

One major lesson we can learn from this story is that no matter how thoroughly an idea has been debunked, people will persist in their belief.

**Harold Camping** is president of Family Radio Stations, boasting worldwide broadcast facilities and more than 150 outlets in the United States.

Camping was brought up in the Calvinist Christian Reformed church, and served as an elder and Sunday School teacher, while running a construction company. He holds a B.S. in civil engineering.

Camping founded Family Radio in 1958, with San Francisco station KEAR, later adding affiliates in New York City, Philadelphia, Washington D.C. and Los Angeles.

His *Open Forum* program, in which he answers listeners’ Bible questions, is translated into several languages and aired on shortwave, cable and Internet worldwide.

Until recently Camping

claimed to have calculated the exact dates of the Rapture (May 21, 2011) and the end of the world (October 21, 2011).

As early as the ‘70s, Camping had developed his own unique view of biblical chronology. In 1992, based on his

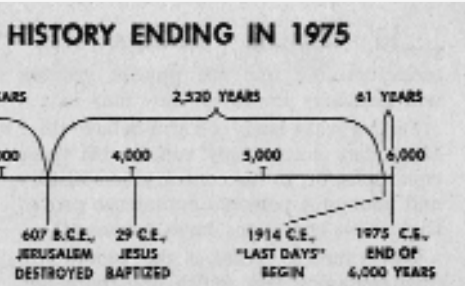


calculations involving the Hebrew calendar, Jewish festivals and the lunar month, combined with other numbers found in the Bible, he suggested Christ’s return might be on September 6, 1994. Failing that, he offered the above dates in 2011.

Of course, the May 21, 2011 Rapture did not happen—and neither did the predicted October 20, 2011 end of the world.

In January of 2010 a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter asked one of Camping’s followers what would happen if May 21, 2011 came and went without incident. He answered: “I can’t even think like that. Everything is too positive right now. There’s too little time to think like that.”

Is there time to think now?



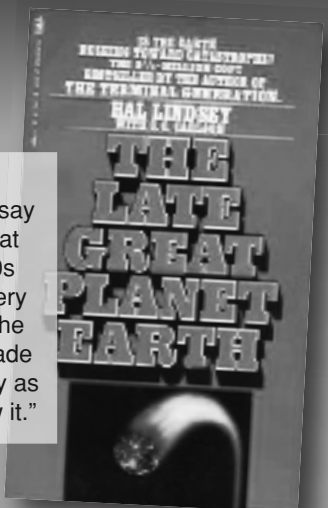
**1966**

Jehovah’s Witnesses predict 1975 as the date for the beginning of the Millennium. Evangelist Herbert Armstrong also suggests this date.



**1980**

Hal Lindsay writes that the 1980s “could very well be the last decade of history as we know it.”



Constant speculation about "the end" requires frequent moving of the goalposts that supposedly mark "the end zone."



cies were fulfilled with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The remaining prophecies are largely misinterpreted—but there are still no dates given (for more details read Greg Albrecht's book *Revelation Revolution*). All such dates are fiction—not the entertaining kind of fiction, but destructive religious fiction (the worst kind).

The appropriate Christian response is not endless speculation as to when the next cataclysm will occur—but how we can help our fellow human beings if and when disasters strike, whether they be big or small.

The end-times, as it is popularly conceived is really nothing more than a longstanding and elaborate hoax perpetrated by those who really should know better. It is one of religion's most effective tools to keep its followers in line, paying and obeying its tyrannical rules, rituals and regulations.

Given the right timing and circumstances, and without keeping a clear focus on faith alone, grace alone and Christ alone, it seems that nearly anyone can be taken in by some kind of religious scam. I have been down that road myself, so it isn't too hard for me to recognize this process with regard to the 2012 phenomenon.

In reality, there is always the chance of some disaster or catastrophe occurring at any time and place. We hope and pray that it doesn't, but some disaster could happen in the year 2012.

Or 2013.

Or tomorrow.

The appropriate Christian response is not endless speculation as to when the next cataclysm will occur—but how we can help our fellow human beings if and when disasters strike, whether they be big or small.

There are, in fact, many tribulations (Acts 14:22) and many antichrists (1 John 2:18) in the world as you read this. Christ is coming for a lit-

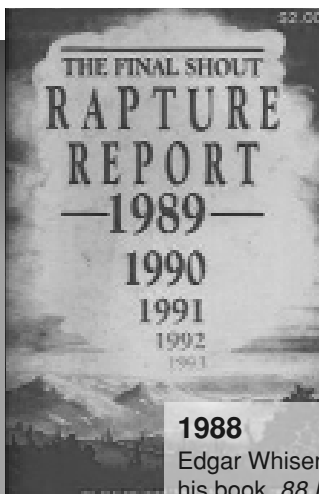
tle over six thousand people in the world every hour—in the sense that their physical lives are ending and they face their Creator.

The good news is—while Christendom may be rife with end-times anxiety—Jesus himself is a source of comfort and hope. Christians ought to be resting in and trusting in Jesus irrespective of threats or fears, real or

The good news is – while Christendom may be rife with end-times anxiety – Jesus himself is a source of comfort and hope. Christians ought to be resting in and trusting in Jesus irrespective of threats or fears, real or imagined...

imagined, fictional or factual. As Paul wrote, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). □

*Adapted—originally printed in the Summer 2011 issue of Plain Truth.*



**1988**  
Edgar Whisenant publishes his book, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*. Target dates were subsequently revised to 1989, 1993, 1994 and 1997.

**1992**  
A Korean prophet declares that the Rapture will be on October 20 or 28 of that year. 20,000 Korean Christians leave school or quit jobs to await the end.



**2000**  
The end of civilization is predicted because computers allegedly will not recognize the year 2000. Opportunists cash in selling books and freeze-dried survivalist food. January 1 comes and goes. Any problems are easily remedied. The world moves on.

