

Are We Facing The End?

Matthew 24:36-44

Intro

In the last decade and a half there have been many movies that have been made about the end of the world or almost the end of human history. Movies like Deep Impact, Armageddon, The Sum of All Fears, The Day the After Tomorrow and one that got the attention of many people, 2012.

The movie 2012 was based on the belief that the Mayan civilization predicted the date of the end of the world. Their long calendar that was created a few thousand years ago and mysteriously ends on Dec, 21, 2012. But nothing happened on that date.

Now according to a few so called prophets we are facing an end time scenario. Will the world end on September 23, 2017.

Many videos on the Internet are promoting this. On this date, the sun will be in the constellation Virgo (the virgin), along with the moon near Virgo's feet. Additionally, Jupiter will be in Virgo, while the planets Venus, Mars, and Mercury will be above and to the right of Virgo in the constellation Leo. Some people claim that this is a very rare event (allegedly only once in 7,000 years) and that it supposedly is a fulfillment of a sign in Revelation 12.

So then, what sort of prophetic event is this sign supposed to bring about? Clearly, most people promoting this have in mind of Jesus' return. Some explicitly state this, that Jesus will return most likely Sept. 23, 2017. These sorts of claims have been made many times before in history and have proven to be hype and outlandish speculations.

For thousands of years different religions have written about the end times and the end of life on earth. ABC, the American TV network, back in August of 2006 aired a 20/20 documentary on "The Last Days on Earth."

They said that we are now living in an age where scientists are adding their voices and their evidence in support of end-of-the-world possibilities.

The world's top scientists, including Stephen Hawking, considered as the foremost living theoretical physicist, describe seven possible deadly scenarios that could threaten humanity. Some can destroy the planet, others have the ability to render us extinct, and all have the power to destroy civilization. How likely are they to occur, and what exactly would happen if they did, and could we survive?

7 Scenarios

1. Climate Change
2. Plague
3. Nuclear War
4. Asteroid
5. Super-volcano
6. Intelligent Machines
7. Death of a Star – Black Hole or Gamma-Ray Burst

Every religion and civilization has an understanding that the world will come to an end. Even scientists know that the world as we know it will come to an end not too distant in the future. There is a whole list of possibilities that could destroy this fragile planet we live on. We realize how fragile it is because in the last 100 years we have nearly destroyed it ourselves with war and environmental hazards.

I believe that the Scriptures are unique in what it has to say about the end of human history or the end of the world. I want to share with you some truth about the future straight from the Bible.

Matthew 24:36-44

Matthew 24 records one of Jesus' longest statements about the future. Jesus gives direct clues to events that will precede His second coming. But, notably, almost half the chapter consists of warnings that no one can predict the precise time of his coming and that we should be ready.

No One Knows When the End will Come

Look at verse 36. *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* And with that statement, Jesus directs our thinking to the issue of when and tells them that the **when** is unknown.

The signs that precede the Second Coming have been clearly given. They are unmistakably detailed here in Matthew 24 and also in Revelation chapters 6 through 18. You can't miss the signs and the generation that is alive during that period will see those signs. They will be observable signs. They will be worldwide signs. But the specific moment, that is – notice it in verse 36 – the day and hour are not known. We need to remind ourselves that He is speaking of a day and an hour.

Down in verse 42, *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what **day** your Lord will come."* Verse 44, *"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an **hour** when you do not expect him."* Verse 50, *"The master of that servant will come on a **day** when he does not expect him and at an **hour** he is not aware of."*

Also in Matthew 25:13 Jesus said, *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the **day** or the **hour**."* So, Jesus is talking about a specific moment.

The general time period or age of the Second Coming will be known. It has to be known because of all the sequence of events. There will be tremendous worldwide conflicts, the wars, the rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom, the famines, and the pestilences.

Also the descriptions of Revelation 6 to 18 where the fresh water is devastated and the salt water is devastated and the sea is turned to blood and where the day is set off its normal cycle and daylight is shortened and there's a greater amount of darkness and all of those events that are very observable will indicate that it is the general period and the general time of the Second Coming. But the day and the hour will not be known. That will come with suddenness in an unexpected way.

So we don't know exactly the specific day and hour. The general time period, yes. Now notice verse 36 and Jesus starts by saying *"no one knows."* God has chosen not to reveal that specific moment and to give no specific sign of that specific moment. And there's reason in His great wisdom for that.

If unbelievers knew the precise time of Christ's arrival, they would be tempted to put off receiving Him as Lord and Saviour until the last moment, thinking they could make the decision any time they wanted before He actually is scheduled to appear. The fact that they will have put off trusting in Christ for as long as they have will be certain evidence they have no sincere desire to follow Him as Lord and Saviour.

As far as believers are concerned, knowledge of that specific time might also make them careless, causing them to withdraw and become spiritually lax, thinking it would be pointless to make plans for serving the Lord.

Neither will the supernatural world know the precise time, not even the angels. Although the angels enjoy intimacy with God, they are not privy to this secret.

Still more amazing, not even the Son knew at the time He spoke these words or at any other time during His incarnation. Although He was fully God as well as fully human (John 1:1, 14), Christ voluntarily restricted His use of certain divine attributes when He became flesh and lived on our planet. It was not that He lost divine attributes but that He voluntarily laid aside the use of some of them and would not manifest those attributes except as directed by the His Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

So, Jesus says people don't know, angels don't know and for now even Jesus says "I don't know," to show the tremendous unexpectedness, suddenness and mystery of the moment of the coming of Jesus Christ.

Then at the end of verse 36 we read, "*But My Father only.*" And "*only*" is emphasized. He's the only one who knows. And, of course, that's why I believe that when Jesus entered into His glory, if not immediately after His resurrection, certainly after His ascension, He then was entered back into the fullness of that which He had before the incarnation and He knows fully when that Second Coming moment will be. But in the midst of the earthly incarnation, He limited Himself.

And so, we don't know, that moment and there's a reason for that, because the Lord wants every generation to live in expectancy, every generation to live **in preparedness**.

The writers of the New Testament time were looking for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. They didn't fully understand the time that would go by, they lived in expectancy. And every generation should because every generation should live in preparedness. If we expect it at any time, we're prepared for it at any time. God only knows when that specific moment will take place.

Like the Days of Noah

Jesus used the Flood to illustrate the point He was making concerning His second coming, namely that the attitude that prevailed during Noah's time will also characterize most people living during the end time just before Christ returns.

They will not be expecting His coming and will not care about it. Despite the signs and fulfillment of prophecy they will simply be unconcerned about the things of the Lord, especially His imminent return to judge the world.

In the days of Noah people ignored the truth. Do you know how long Noah preached? 2 Peter 2:5 calls Noah a preacher of righteousness. Do you think he built a big wooden ark in the middle of the desert and told people there was going to be a flood? And they laughed because there was no body of water around the vicinity of the ark. And you know how long he built that ark? 120 years and they laughed and mocked him.

He wasn't just a boat builder, he was a preacher. And for 120 years while he built the boat, he must have been asked a million times, "*Why are you building the boat?*" And that was the trigger

for the sermon, “*Because God is going to judge the wickedness of this world and only those who put their faith in Him are going to escape. And I’m building the boat as a way of escape, would you like to make a reservation?*”

And the people mocked. For 120 years they went on with life as usual while he preached the warning, and they didn't believe it.

It says they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Now those aren't sins. Eating and drinking are not sins and marrying and giving in marriage are not sins. Giving in marriage refers to the families who give their young people to be married.

What it means is life went on as usual. They just went through the routine and they just lived as if nothing would ever change. They totally disregarded Noah’s warning. They just went through the cycles of normal personal family and business enterprise; life as usual, just went through the routine.

And so, the generation facing Christ’s return will be like Noah's generation, warned for many years. The future generation will be warned and the fact is they're being warned right now. They've been warned ever since the New Testament was written and whatever generation it is that will be alive when that happens. This generation could be this one.

Also we learn from the Genesis 6:5 that individuals in Noah’s time were violent, corrupt, and wicked. “*The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*” And in Genesis 6:11, “*Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.*” One only has to look at our world today to get many examples of what passes for violence, corruption, and wickedness.

As we read about Noah's life, we discover that he lived in a decadent society. The Bible says that all the imaginations of peoples' hearts were continually wicked – they were always thinking about things that God would find detestable.

Conclusion

But the word here is in verse 20 and verse 42. “*Be alert.*” It means to be continually alert. Every generation, every person, be alert, “*For you know not what hour your Lord does come.*” It's a cry for constant vigilance, constant alertness. He will come and people who recognize that He is coming will be alert to that coming, spiritually aware.

Listen, this is not fiction, this is fact. This is how it will be. Just as the prophets said how it would be in His first coming and He fulfilled every prophecy, so will He in His Second Coming. Watch, therefore, for you don't know what hour your Lord comes.

It could be this generation in which Jesus will return. Are you ready? Are you alert? Are you reading the signs of the times? Are you right with the Lord? Have you made peace with Him?

If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, you may know Him by a simple act of faith, inviting Him into your life, the one who lived and died and rose again for you. Confess your sin, repent and embrace Him as your Lord and Saviour.

And those of you who are Christians, again may I just speak to my own heart as well, this is a reminder for us that we need to make investments that are eternal. Our earth is going to burn up in the end (2 Peter 3:12) and only what we have invested in eternity will survive, and remain. I

just ask God to renew our commitment to make eternal investments with all that we have... possessions, resources, abilities, time, everything.

2 Peter 3:10-15

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ¹¹Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹²as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. ¹³But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. ¹⁴So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. ¹⁵Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation...