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2012: A Spaced-Out Oddity What's the Big Fuss About the Year 2012?

by J. Greg Sheryl

"The world, as we know it, will soon come to an end." This solemn announcement is given by the United States President played by actor Danny Glover at a G8 Summit conference in the ultimate disaster movie — one dealing with the end of the world — entitled *2012*, which made its debut in theaters nationwide in November 2009. Its title and some of its themes reflect a fear on the part of some in our world and a *certainty* on the part of others that the year 2012 — specifically, December 21, 2012 — will mark the end of the world. During the movie several reasons for the world's demise that have been given by 2012 doomsayers are either stated or suggested.

OF MICE AND MAYANS

The primary force behind these fears is the fact that the 5,125-year Maya Long Count calendar cycle is due to end on December 21, 2012.¹

One Christian author and publisher writes:

"This brings us to the central focus of this book — *December 21, 2012*. What does the Mayan long-

count calendar have to say about this date, and on what is this conclusion based? December 21, 2012, is the final day of the Mayan calendar — the end of time and possibly the end of the world. The Mayans regard this day as the point when human history could come to a close."²

Although it is doubtful that the Maya looked upon the end of this calendar cycle as representing the end of the world, this author has accurately presented how some people *believe* the Maya viewed this date.

Another Christian source notes:

(continues on page 12)



Inside this Issue:

WHY ALL THE RELIGIOUS CONFUSION TODAY?	PAGE 2
MEMORIAL NUMBERS PROBLEMATIC FOR WATCHTOWER.....	PAGE 3
BRUCE WILKINSON AS THE WIZARD OF ODD	PAGE 4

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2012: A Spaced-Out Oddity

(continued from page 1)

"The newest band of [doomsday] soothsayers is telling us that the world is going to end on or about December 21, 2012. ... The New Age promoters of the 2012 doomsday prophecy got it from their interpretation of the Mayan calendar. Among their other achievements, the Maya — native Americans whose ancestral lands are in Guatemala, Belize, the Mexican states of Tabasco and Chiapas, the Yucatan Peninsula, and the western regions of Honduras and El Salvador — developed a calendar which could accurately track the movements of the sun and the constellations over thousands of years. *Supposedly* (according to the Long Count of the Mayan calendar), the present world cycle, the Age of the Jaguar, began on August 13, 3114 BC, and is due to end on December 21, 2012."³

Christian pastor and author Mark Hitchcock explains: "The Maya weren't just interested in time, they

were obsessed with it. ... The Mayan calendar keepers painstakingly charted the cycles of the moon, the sun, and Venus."⁴ Further, "The Mayan obsession with time can be seen in the fact that they developed approximately 20 different calendars."⁵

Maya expert Mark Van Stone notes:

"Just as we do, the Maya had *several calendars* to record time. The Maya had very complex and interlocking calendar systems, which were as precise as modern day calendars. In the same way our Gregorian count ties to an important event, —the birth of Christ— the Maya calendar also counts forward from an important 'Creation' date, 11 August 3114 BCE. The Maya recorded time mainly using 3 interconnected calendars — the *Tzolk'in*, the *Haab*, and the *Long Count*. Like us, they kept track of other cycles, but these only appeared in special circumstances."⁶

Van Stone also says:

"...the *Long Count* (the calendar which reaches a critical number in 2012). This is a number, used

similarly to our numerical 'year 2008,' counting 'years' and days since the last Creation in 3114 BC. (The 'years' here counted, called *Haabs*, are only 360 days long.)"⁷

He further observes, "Immediately after the Long Count is the *Tzolk'in* date. This is a divinatory calendar of 260 days."⁸ And that "**the ancient Maya were fanatical about situating their events in time.** Often the date on a monument will occupy more space than the event that it features."⁹

2012: DOOMSDAY ARRIVAL OR PARADISE REGAINED?

One source has correctly noted:

"All [the 2012 doomsayers] agree that terrible things will happen to the Earth in 2012, but many also assert that this will be the beginning of a new age of happiness and spiritual growth for the survivors."¹⁰

Indeed, some who believe that December 21, 2012 is significant believe that this date will bring the end of the world. Whereas, others believe that this date will bring about "an era of quantum transformation" and a

“new age of human consciousness.” And still others believe that somehow both of these things will occur — for example, that after a global catastrophe occurs, a “New Age” will dawn for the survivors.¹¹ This latter “both/and” scenario was portrayed in the film *2012*.

One article names several of the key proponents and popularizers of some sort of special significance about December 21, 2012, based on the Maya calendar: José Argüelles, Terence McKenna, John Major Jenkins, Whitley Strieber, Adrian Gilbert, Daniel Pinchbeck, and Lawrence Joseph.¹² There are, of course, others as well, including Patrick Geryl, Gregg Braden, and Graham Hancock.

While it is true, as mentioned above, that some sources have an optimistic view of 2012, the focus of this article will be on the doomsday view.

One source who deserves special mention is José Argüelles. Mark Hitchcock explains:

“The man who put 2012 ‘on the map’ is José Argüelles, who authored a book in 1987 titled *The Mayan Factor*. He also established the Harmonic Convergence in 1987. It was a peace initiative that occurred on August 16-17, 1987. People all over the world gathered at allegedly sacred sites to awaken the ‘energy grid’ and bring in a 25-year era of spiritual growth that will culminate in 2012. For Argüelles, ‘2012 is a marker, a wake-up call in our DNA,’ and the cycle will culminate during June-December 2012. After the Harmonic Convergence, the 2012 apocalyptic subculture began to emerge. They began a 25-year countdown to 2012. The 2012 movement has remained under the radar for almost 20 years, but has suddenly exploded into the mainstream.”¹³

As a result of researching for this article, it is difficult to determine whether José Argüelles is delusional,

a clever although unscrupulous businessman, or both. One 2012 researcher states, for instance:

“An unnerving development of late is that Argüelles has begun referring to himself as ‘Valum Votan,’ the reincarnation of the great [7th-century A.D.] Maya king of Palenque [called Pacal Votan].”¹⁴

Although the *basis* for predicting the end of the world on December 21, 2012 is that the Maya Long Count calendar ends its cycle on that date (or, according to others, on December 23, 2012), a host of other supporting reasons are usually brought to bear in order to bolster this theory. Two kinds of reasons are given: “prophetic” and “scientific.”

VARIOUS “PROPHECIES”

On the back cover of one Christian book dealing with 2012, prophecies from a number of sources are listed, including the Bible, Judaism, Islam, the Web Bot Project, the Q’ero Inca shamans, the Toltecs and Aztecs, the Book of Changes (also known as the I Ching), the Hopi Indians, the Cherokee Indians, Merlin the Magician, Mother Shipton, Nostradamus, Roman Catholic prophecies, including the “Last-pope Prophecy” (of St. Malachy — not to be confused with the biblical prophet Malachi), Hindu, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian expectations.¹⁵

We will examine four of these here.

1. The Bible. — There is certainly no Bible verse that specifically says the world will end in 2012. In fact, according to Bible prophecy, it seems that some things would need to occur first. Many believe that the rapture of the Church needs to occur first. And many believe that the Bible teaches that the reign of the Antichrist and the Second Coming of Christ need to occur before the world can end. Doomsday concerns over 2012 seem to be largely silent about Jesus, or even about God; or at least about any major role for them regarding 2012. The 2012 doomsday scenario is a “Christ-less apocalypse.”

Although there are some appeals to biblical passages — in Revelation or in Isaiah — the primary support seems to be mystical: the so-called “Bible code.”¹⁶ Bible prophecy teacher Mark Hitchcock explains how the “Bible code” operates:

“The basic tenet underlying the whole Bible code phenomenon is that there are hidden, cryptic codes in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament — ‘a Bible beneath the Bible’ — that can be discovered by using computers to search for the letters of specific words that occur at a specific interval or spacing. The process is referred to as ‘equidistant letter sequencing’ (ELS), or the ‘skip’ process. ... In other words, the sequencer finds a Hebrew letter, skips ten letters, finds the next Hebrew letter, then skips ten more letters, and continues this process until the ‘hidden’ word is revealed. The skip can be of any length as long as the skips are equal, and the word can be spelled forward, backward, vertically, horizontally, or diagonally.”¹⁷

Using the “Bible code,” its popularizer, “[Michael] Drosnin points specifically to 2012 as an ominous, even terminal year. According to Drosnin, the words *earth annihilated* correspond to the year 2012.”¹⁸

Hitchcock gives seven reasons for rejecting the “Bible code,”¹⁹ including examples of past failed prophecies based on it.²⁰ Among the reasons is:

“...there is absolutely no biblical support for the practice of finding codes hidden in the Bible. Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever did such, even though they quoted or alluded to the Old Testament hundreds of times.”²¹

Concluding his discussion of the subject of the “Bible code” theory, Hitchcock states:

“Bible codes are totally unreliable for predicting the future, including any events related to 2012 or the end of the world. If you search long enough and

make the skips between letters far enough apart, you can find just about anything you want to find."²²

2. The Papal Prophecies of St. Malachy. — St. Malachy (1094-1148) was a 12th-century Roman Catholic bishop of Armagh, Ireland. He was a friend of the monastery abbot and hymnist Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernard wrote the "Life of St. Malachy."

Regarding his supposed "papal prophecies," one Roman Catholic source says:

"But Malachy is better known today for the alleged prophecies about those who would be Pope from the time of Celestine II, who died in 1144, to the end of the world. According to the alleged list, which was not discovered until more than four centuries after Malachy's death, there would be 112 Popes after Celestine, ending with Peter the Roman, 'who will feed his flock amid many tribulations, after which the seven-hilled city [Rome] will be destroyed and the dreadful Judge will judge the people.' Peter the Roman is the only Pope listed by name; the others are described by short phrases that lend themselves to varied interpretations."²³

Of the 112 popes listed in the prophecy, the current pope is number 111. Therefore, it is speculated that the next pope, called "Peter the Roman" in Malachy's list, is the last pope before the end of the world. In other words, if the current pope, Pope Benedict XVI, dies prior to December 21, 2012, then the next pope, whose actual or symbolic name, according to the prophecy, is Peter the Roman, could be head of the Roman Catholic Church at the end of the world, which the 2012 prognosticators believe will be December 21, 2012.

Many contend that the prophecies are a forgery, not written by St. Malachy at all. One contemporary Roman Catholic dictionary says:

"[The prophecies of St. Malachy are] falsely attributed to St. Mal-

achy, Bishop of Armagh (d. 1148); [instead they are] actually forgeries by an unknown writer in the sixteenth century. The first seventy-five 'prophecies' are fairly accurate because they were actually history, but from then on the list becomes vague, fanciful, and subject to wide interpretation."²⁴

Except for the 112th "prophecy" about Peter the Roman, the other 111 so-called "prophecies of Malachy" simply consist of a short Latin phrase, supposedly descriptive in some way, of each pope.²⁵ But as contemporary Roman Catholic educator James Drumme has noted, "the prophecies are so vague, and require such imagination to fit them to modern-day Pontiffs, that they are probably spurious."²⁶ Furthermore, some have suggested that it is possible that there might be an indeterminate number of additional popes between the 111th pope on the list and Peter the Roman.²⁷ Nevertheless, some today still regard the prophecies of St. Malachy as worthy of belief. Doubtless they will be eagerly watching for the next pope, whose papacy will supposedly signal the end of the world.

3. Nostradamus. — Nostradamus, whose name was Michel de Nostredame (1503-1566), is one of the most famous seers in Western history.²⁸ He was both an astrologer and a physician. He seems to be referenced whenever prophecies of doomsday are discussed, because his prophecies are filled with themes of gloom and destruction.

One source analyzing his work says:

"By 1550 Nostradamus had become fully engaged in the prophecy business. ... he soon embarked upon a project with far-reaching implications — the *Centuries*. Composing prophetic four-line verses [called quatrains], he arranged them in ten books of one hundred verses each — hence the name *Centuries*. Nostradamus's fame rests upon this volume, which contains prophecies from his time to 3797. The

quatrains are not in chronological order. They jump back and forth through history, allegedly prophesying events at different points in time. Moreover, Nostradamus's predictions are couched in obscure, ambiguous symbols — and can thus be interpreted in many ways.²⁹ To further complicate matters, he does not date his prophecies. Nostradamus's vagueness can in part be attributed to the threat of persecution; it may also be that he enjoyed being mysterious."³⁰

The same author notes:

"Nostradamus is notable for having furthered a different approach to doomsday. Nearly all previous end-time thinkers had expected God to bring an end to the world. ... [But] Nostradamus advanced the notion of a secular end of the world. He saw the apocalypse as a political event; the world would end as a result of secular causes. Accordingly, Nostradamus never spoke of a divine judgment or a future paradise."³¹

Likewise, those who predict a 2012 doomsday also tend to portray a secular apocalypse, rather than one brought about by God.

Nostradamus was a Roman Catholic. However, the Roman Catholic Church has distanced itself from his prophecies. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* notes, for instance:

"The subject of many commentaries, Nostradamus' prophecies were condemned in 1781 by the Congregation of the Index, the body set up by the Roman Catholic Church for the examination of books and manuscripts."³²

Roman Catholic educator James Drumme, wrote:

"The [Roman Catholic] Church made clear its attitude toward Nostradamus in 1781 when it put his works on the Index of books that Catholics were forbidden to read without ecclesiastical

authorization. That Index no longer exists, but the reasons why the Church included the unreliable writings of Nostradamus on it are just as valid today."³³

His prophecies' vague, obscure, and ambiguous nature guarantees the highest possible chances of at least some of them seeming to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, *The Encyclopedia Americana* states that, "Although his predictions were often wrong, Nostradamus' reputation as the greatest Renaissance seer appears unshakable."³⁴ Christian investigative reporter Richard Abanes notes:

"In truth, Nostradamus may actually be history's *worst* prognosticator. According to well-known illusionist/magician James Randi (famed debunker of fraudulent faith healers and psychics), an investigation of one hundred three prophecies by Nostradamus that specifically mention a date, place, or person yielded an amazing discovery: none of them came true! ... How could a prophet so inaccurate gain such widespread notoriety?"³⁵

Those who believe in Nostradamus' prophecies at times do ingenious word juggling and twisting to make it appear that some of his prophecies that failed actually came true. But their efforts sometimes fall apart upon closer examination.

Christian author B.J. Oropeza gives a fitting summation:

"Finally, Nostradamus's means of prophesying conflicted with Scripture. He went into trances, consulted horoscopes and used other forms of divination (Deut 18). By Scripture's standards, his false prophecies make him a false prophet."³⁶

4. The Web Bot Project. — Synthia Andrews and Colin Andrews have this to say about the Web Bot Project:

"This project has been underway since the late 1990s. The person who originated it prefers to remain anonymous and just calls

himself 'Cliff.' It relies on a system of 'spiders' that 'crawl' the Internet, much like a search engine, looking for particular kinds of words. According to Cliff, the spiders, 'target discussion groups, translation sites, and places where regular people post a lot of text. No, we don't do e-mail scanning: that's what we have the government for.' ... Whenever the spider finds a keyword, it takes a small 2,048-byte snip of the surrounding text and sends it to a central collection point. Over a period of time the 'chatter points' concentrate, revealing a spike in intensity. Like the Bible Code, the technology doesn't come out with direct messages. It gives words or phrases that reflect people's thought processes. Web Bot technology appears to tap into preconscious awareness, or the collective unconscious. It finds patterns before events occur."³⁷

And the pair further note:

"When the Mayan calendar end date is used as a keyword, there is only one Web Bot prediction. It predicts a pole shift in 2012. Since this is a main theme people are discussing, you may wonder what use it has. The interesting fact is that the spikes arrive before the events, not after."³⁸

The authors list three events that the Web Bot Project seemed to have some success predicting.³⁹ On the one hand, they suggest that the Project taps into a sort of collective ESP that mankind supposedly has.⁴⁰ On the other hand, they appear to imply that perhaps people are magically creating things by thinking about them!⁴¹ This is very reminiscent of the philosophy contained in the contemporary New Thought/New Age book *The Secret*,⁴² as well as the idea of modern-day Word Faith teachers who teach that a person's spoken words create realities.⁴³

It should be obvious that the only thing the Web Bot Project is capable of revealing is what people are currently discussing. It is utterly inca-

ble of predicting the future or of *creating* the future.

Secondly, to attempt to use the Web Bot Project, the Bible Code, or some other means of predicting the future is to involve oneself in the practice of divination — a practice clearly forbidden in the Bible:

"When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you" (Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

APPEALS TO "SCIENCE"

The 2012 doomsday advocates don't just appeal to various mystical and occultic prophecies to argue for a supposed Maya-predicted end of the world in 2012. They also try to enlist science — actually, *pseudo-science* — to support a 2012 apocalypse. Various scenarios are projected that might end most life on earth. One popular theory that has made the rounds is that there is a "Planet X," sometimes referred to as "Nibiru" (or "Eris"), heading toward earth. David Morrison, a NASA astrobiologist, has received many questions about this "planet." He explains:

"Although the name of the Sumerian god Nibiru is most often given to this object, I quickly learned that some Web sites were also calling it Planet X or Eris. Planet X is a generic term used

by astronomers over the past century for any unknown or hypothesized planets beyond Pluto. Eris is an actual, newly discovered dwarf planet, a little larger than Pluto but much farther away. By conflating these, some were claiming that NASA had found Nibiru or that Eris was going to fly past Earth in 2012."⁴⁴

In a follow-up article about Nibiru, Morrison catalogs other dangers, supposedly based on science, that might happen on December 21, 2012:

"As the [Planet X/Nibiru] story grows in complexity, many more doomsday scenarios are being suggested, often unrelated to Nibiru. These include a reversal of the Earth's magnetic field, severe solar storms associated with the eleven-year solar cycle (which may peak in 2012), a reversal of Earth's rotation axis, a 90 degree flip of the rotation axis, bombardment by large comets or asteroids, and bombardment by gamma rays or various unspecified lethal rays coming from the center of the Milky Way Galaxy or the 'dark rift' seen in a nearby galactic spiral arm. A major theme has become celestial alignments, which fascinate laypersons. Supposedly, the Sun will align with the galactic center (or maybe with the Milky Way Dark Rift) on December 21, 2012, subjecting us to potentially deadly forces."⁴⁵

One exponent of a 2012 doomsday is Lawrence Joseph, about whom one article reports:

"**Lawrence Joseph**, author of *Apocalypse 2012*, summarizes almost every available path to global disaster to make the case that the world is about to end, and that the Maya predicted it. ... He says that on December 21, 2012, at 11:11 pm Universal Time [Greenwich Mean Time], the solar system will eclipse the view from Earth of the center of the Milky Way, 'disrupting whatever energy typically streams to the

Earth' from the center of our home galaxy. This will 'throw out of kilter vital mechanisms of our bodies and of the Earth.' (To inject a note of realism here: the center of our galaxy is 26,000-28,000 light-years from our solar system. One wonders what real energy flow could be disrupted.) Meanwhile, all those who have ever lived on the Earth will have been reincarnated by 2012, in order to 'fulfill the sacred mission of that year.'"⁴⁶

David Morrison has received questions about reports submitted to him at NASA's "Ask An Astrobiologist" website (<http://astrobiology.nasa.gov/ask-an-astrobiologist>). In two articles written for the *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine, he gives the substance of some of the questions he has received, along with his responses to the questions. Given below are his responses (or excerpts from some of his responses) to inquirers, gleaned from his first article in the *Skeptical Inquirer* about these matters:

"The bottom line is that Nibiru is a myth, with no basis whatever in fact. To an astronomer, persistent claims about a planet that is nearby but invisible are just plain silly."⁴⁷

"Please don't be scared; the entire Nibiru story, as well as any concerns about Eris threatening Earth are a hoax, nothing more."⁴⁸

"There is no planet alignment in 2012 or any other time in the next several decades. As to the Earth being in the center of the Milky Way, I don't know what this phrase means. If you are referring to the Milky Way Galaxy, we are rather far toward the edge of this spiral galaxy, some 30,000 light-years from the center."⁴⁹

"Quite a few people have been asking me about the danger of a polar shift. ... 'Polar shift' seems to have become a buzzword on websites that promote catastrophist ideas and various con-

spiracy theories, and so this phrase gets passed on from one blog to another without ever being defined. If this means some sudden change in the position of the pole (that is, the rotation axis of the Earth), then that is impossible. There is no point in speculating about the consequences of something that has never happened and never will. ... The bottom line is that there is no possibility of a 'polar shift' and no danger associated with one."⁵⁰

"The magnetic pole is different; it regularly shifts position by a small amount, and ... the polarity of the Earth's magnetic pole reverses roughly once per million years (on average). This magnetic reversal appears to be generated internally and not to be influenced by any outside events. There is no indication that it will happen anytime soon, but more to the point, a magnetic reversal would not cause any of the horrible consequences that you find associated with 'pole shift' on the catastrophist Internet sites."⁵¹

Near the end of this article, Morrison writes:

"Some even accept ... that the world is 'turning upside down.' They also accept that we will be in the center of the Milky Way Galaxy, 30,000 light-years away, in 2012. The fact that none of this is being reported in newspapers or on television is simply accepted as evidence of a grand conspiracy. Do they ever ask themselves why governments are pursuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, worried about global warming, and conducting an energetic presidential election in the U.S. if they all know the world will end in four years? It has been a revelation to me to glimpse this underworld of conspiracy theories and doomsday predictions."⁵²

Some people have predicted a catastrophic "solar maximum" for the

year 2012. One source notes:

“There’s always some type of sunspot activity happening on the sun’s surface. However, every 11 years there’s a surge of activity, called the solar maximum. Five to six years after the surge, or maximum activity time, there is a minimum activity period, called the solar minimum.”⁵³

Later, this same source says, “The next solar maximum will be in 2012 and is expected to produce severe storms and electromagnetic disruption.”⁵⁴

However, in a section of his evangelistic website “Reasons To Believe” that deals specifically with the 2012 hype, Christian astronomer and author Hugh Ross states:

“While it’s true that the Sun will be at sunspot and flaring maximum in 2012, such a solar event occurs every eleven years. The worst case scenario for a solar maximum is that a few giant solar flares could temporarily disrupt satellite and radio communications. Some GPS satellites could possibly be knocked out, but certainly life on Earth would not be threatened. So far, sunspot monitoring indicates that the 2012 solar maximum will likely be moderate to minimal.”⁵⁵

The website also assures readers:

“From an astronomical perspective, no one should be particularly concerned about December 21, 2012. Dire warnings about Venetian gravity, Planet X, and solar flaring spring from misinformation and distortion, not on fact. From a biblical perspective, we all would do well to heed the words of Jesus: ‘Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.’”⁵⁶

NASA astronomer David Morrison, mentioned above, writes:

“While I hope that many people who read my replies are pleased

to learn that the world is not about to end, I am surprised at so many angry responses. These come from people who seem to want the world to end in 2012, who are upset to be told that this catastrophe will not happen.”⁵⁷

DON’T BLAME IT ON THE MAYA

Although the December 21, 2012, doomsday date is based on the Maya Long Count calendar cycle end date, the previous “prophetic” and “scientific” warnings (and more besides) have been used to add support to the theory that the world will end at that time. So everything about this theory really depends on the meaning of the 5,125-year Maya Long Count calendar cycle that purportedly began on August 11, 3114 B.C.⁵⁸ and ends on December 21, 2012 (or, according to some, on December 23, 2012 — although it seems that most of the attention has been given to the former ending date rather than to this latter one). The start date and end date of this Maya Long Count calendar cycle are *both* written as 13.0.0.0. It is this date which supposedly correlates with the Gregorian calendar date of December 21 (or 23), 2012.

However, it does not appear that the Maya really believed that the end of their Long Count calendar cycle signified the end of the world.

Maya scholar Mark Van Stone wrote:

“Maya Scholars, in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador and North America have been watching with amusement and dismay as self-styled experts proclaim that ancient Maya prophets foretold an earth-shattering happening to occur December 21, 2012. This predicted phenomenon gets described in contradictory but often cataclysmic fashion — as an ecological collapse, a sunspot storm, a rare cosmic conjunction of the earth, sun, and the galactic center, a new and awesome stage of our evolution, and even a sudden reversal of the Earth’s

magnetic field which will erase all our computer drives. ... In sum, the world as we know it will suddenly come to a screeching halt. These predictions are alleged to be prophecies by so-called ‘Ancient Mayans’ whose ‘astronomically precise’ calendar supposedly terminates on that date. According to such accounts, these mysterious Maya geniuses appeared suddenly, built an extraordinary civilization, designed in it clues for us, and then suddenly, inexplicably, vanished, as if they had completed their terrestrial mission. These same experts claim special credibility for the Maya prophecies by asserting that these historic sages, with their possible extraterrestrial origins, had tapped into an astonishing esoteric wisdom. ... First, let me affirm that the year 2012 does hold particular significance in Mayan scholarship. Those of us who study the ancient and modern Maya ... have been anticipating the end of the Maya Great Cycle for some time. ... We have known for half a century that this date probably correlates to December 21 (or December 23) in the year 2012 in the Gregorian calendar.”⁵⁹

In another article elsewhere on the same website, Van Stone states:

“There is nothing in the Maya or Aztec or ancient Mesoamerican prophecy to suggest that they prophesied a sudden or major change of any sort in 2012. The notion of a ‘Great Cycle’ coming to an end is completely a modern invention. *Maya inscriptions that predict the future consistently show that they expected life to go on pretty much the same forever.* At Palenque, for instance, they predicted that people in the year 4772 AD would be celebrating the anniversary of the coronation of their great king Pakal.”⁶⁰

He further notes:

“Even if we were to find evidence of actual Maya prophecies about 2012, that doesn’t make them true. Ap-

parently all of Christendom expected Jesus to return in the year 1000, for example.⁶¹ And maybe the most important question to ask was voiced to me by Bill Saturno, discoverer of the San Bartolo murals. If the Maya were such skilled prophets, how could they have missed the [Spanish] Conquest? 'Didn't see that one coming, did they?' The single most devastating disaster to befall the peoples of the Americas of all time, and not a word about it in the entire corpus of Mayan prophetic literature."⁶²

When discussing whether or not the Maya calendar was more accurate than our own — a common claim made in reference to the Maya — Van Stone says it:

"Depends how you define 'accurate.' ... Although it is technically incorrect to say the ancient Maya had a 'more accurate calendar than we do,' one must respect that the precision of their observations and their astronomical recordkeeping were astonishingly accurate. However, they were no more precise than the ancient Greeks, and considerably less accurate than our modern measurements. Claiming that the Maya calendar was 'more accurate' than the Gregorian implies, of course, that they had access to knowledge superior to our own, knowledge of a highly esoteric or even extra-terrestrial nature. This is simply not true. They simply used the tools they had at hand, and their penetrating, persistent intelligence to do the best they could. An advantage they possessed was a clearer, darker sky than we of the Industrial Age will ever see again."⁶³

In her book, *2012: Science or Superstition*, author and researcher Alexandra Bruce states:

"The Maya Long Count calendar had fallen out of use hundreds of years before the Spaniards arrived in Mesoamerica [where the Maya lived]. ... Technically, 2012

is NOT the 'end of the Maya calendar' because the Long Count is linear and theoretically infinite, with the ability to express any date in the past or future, much like the calendar used in the West. Also, there are many ancient Maya inscriptions with dates beyond 2012, notably one with a date that corresponds to October 21, 4772 ... December 21, 2012 does correspond to the end of the current World Age and the beginning of the next World Age, as described in the ancient Maya creation myth, the *Popol Vuh*. ... While it is true that the 2012 date marked the end of a World Age for the ancient Maya, most modern-day Maya do not believe that this date is particularly significant."⁶⁴

Another source notes:

"But for all the hype, there is little evidence the ancient Maya ever intended for the end of their calendar to be read as a portent for disaster. 'These prophecies of doom really don't have any basis in what we know about the Maya,' said Stephen Houston, a professor of anthropology at Brown University and a specialist of Maya hieroglyphic writing. 'The Maya descriptions barely talk about this event.' Instead, Houston said, the Maya saw their 'long count,' the longest of their cyclical calendars, coming to an end in 2012 but also beginning anew on that date, without disastrous consequences."⁶⁵

One final source makes a good segue into what will be said afterward:

"But scholars are bristling at attempts to link the ancient Maya with trends in contemporary spirituality. ... 'For the ancient Maya, it was a huge celebration to make it to the end of a whole [calendar] cycle,' says Sandra Noble, executive director of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies in

Crystal River, Fla. To render Dec. 21, 2012, as a doomsday or moment of cosmic shifting, she says, is 'a complete fabrication and a chance for a lot of people to cash in.' 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. This means that 'whatever energy typically streams to Earth from the center of the Milky Way will indeed be disrupted on 12/21/12 at 11:11 p.m. Universal Time,' [Lawrence] Joseph writes. But scholars doubt the ancient Maya extrapolated great meaning from anticipating the alignment — if they were even aware of what the configuration would be. Astronomers generally agree that 'it would be impossible the Maya themselves would have known that,' says Susan Milbrath, a Maya archaeo-astronomer and a curator at the Florida Museum of Natural History. What's more, she says, 'we have no record or knowledge that they would think the world would come to an end at that point.' University of Florida anthropologist Susan Gillespie says the 2012 phenomenon comes 'from media and from other people making use of the Maya past to fulfill agendas that are really their own.'⁶⁶

THE UGLY TRUTH

New York Magazine reported on a promotional event for the movie *2012*, which took place in a ballroom at the Four Seasons at a city in Wyoming. Featured at the event were three "2012ologists" (a term that seems to refer to students and/or exponents of various theories about the year 2012 holding some special significance): Daniel Pinchbeck, John Major Jenkins, and Lawrence Joseph. All three are big names in the "2012ology" world, and all three have authored books championing some sort of significance associated with 2012. The words and attitudes of these famous 2012 authors regarding that year as reported are interesting:

"2012 is also the name of a big-budget disaster movie based on the Mayan scenarios depicted in [Daniel] Pinchbeck's books. To promote the film, Sony Pictures sponsored this junket, featuring the stars and director of the movie; three 2012ologists, including Pinchbeck. ... But nobody in the Four Seasons seemed to believe that the end was near, least of all Pinchbeck, who was once described in the *Times* as 'equal parts Jesuit and Jim Morrison' and is known for ingesting psychedelics in the Amazon. 'I'm not a fundamentalist about the date,' Pinchbeck said, and his fellow 2012ologists nodded in agreement. ... 'Two thousand twelve is this date, you know, which there's a lot of ideas about,' said the [movie's] director Roland Emmerich. ... 'And we chose the destructive one.' After giving PowerPoint presentations, the 2012ologists were ... subjected to a gauntlet of five-minute television interviews. They were asked countless variations on the same question: 'Will the world really end in 2012?' The 2012ologists answered, patiently at first, 'Actually, the Maya never predicted any doomsday scenario,' [they said]. ... By the time the 2012ologists sat down with me, off-camera, they looked beaten down. 'I think the real story is that 2012 is not about doomsday,' John Major Jenkins said. At some point, each of the 2012ologists used the word *counterproductive* to describe the film's catastrophic vision. So why were they there? 'That's a good question,' said Lawrence Joseph. 'I got a message today that the tuition for my kids' private school's going up. And what does that mean? That means I've got to sell *x* number of more books to pay it. And as true to my principles and beliefs as I'd like to be, you know, I've got to come up with another ten grand next year above what I expected. There's a certain level of compro-

mise that is indefensible but, to me, unavoidable.' While I talked to Jenkins and Joseph, Pinchbeck hunched over his BlackBerry and pounded out e-mails with his thumbs. When I asked the 2012ologists how they planned to sell books in 2013, Pinchbeck glanced up from his screen and offered, with a glint of hope, '[The George Orwell book] 1984 still sells well.'"⁶⁷

SO WHAT IF THE MAYA CALENDAR CYCLE ENDS IN 2012?

However, let's suppose for a moment that the Maya *had* actually prophesied the end of the world in 2012. Christians need to first put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the words of the living God as given in the Bible. It is His recorded Word (the Bible) that is true and holy; not words from pagan or occultic sources; nor the words of New Age hucksters. Nor are these pagan prophecies on a par with God's Word.

The prophet Jeremiah noted the difference between the words of God and the prophecies of men:

"I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?' says the LORD. 'Is not My word like a fire?' says the LORD, 'And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?' ... 'Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,' says the LORD, 'and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them

or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,' says the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:25-29, 32).

And the Lord told Isaiah the prophet:

"And when they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:19-20).

And again, Isaiah the prophet testified of God's words to him:

"For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: 'Do not say, "A conspiracy," concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread'" (Isaiah 8:11-13).

Part of this latter passage is reminiscent of the words of Jesus to His disciples in the Upper Room on the night before His crucifixion, when He told them:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1).

And also:

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

SUMMING UP

Christian astronomer and author Hugh Ross has written:

"The Mayan 'end' date is also said to align with Incan and Egyptian calendars, as well as with the prophecies of Nostradamus, Edgar Cayce, and I Ching.

Perhaps few people realize that doomsayers for over a hundred years have been alleging that the Mayan, Incan, and Egyptian calendars predict a specific, imminent date for the end of the world. In my lifetime, over half dozen such dates have come and gone without incident. A closer look explains why: these calendars and prophecies are so esoteric, so vague, that one can pull almost *any* doomsday date from them."⁶⁸

Christian pastor and Bible prophecy teacher Mark Hitchcock hits the nail on the head when he says the December 21, 2012, date has been nicknamed (among other things), "A Y2K for the New Age."⁶⁹

The Y2K reference is to the turn-of-the-millennium from 1999 to 2000, which was prophesied by many — including some Christian authors — to bring worldwide disaster, due to the millennium computer bug for which there wasn't adequate time to address. This "problem" would supposedly cause computers to malfunction when January 1, 2000, arrived, creating worldwide catastrophe. Nothing catastrophic happened.

As Hitchcock notes, the "Maya 2012 end-date" is truly the New Age movement's end-of-the-world scenario. Says Hitchcock:

"The 2012 phenomenon is the New Age eschatology.⁷⁰ It's their answer to how the world will end, or at least how the world as we know it will end and usher in a new stage of collective consciousness. ... The New Age movement has adopted the Mayan calendar as the centerpiece for its view of how this world will end and the next one, if there is one, will begin. The startlingly unique feature of the Mayan doomsday prophecy, and the New Age eschatology, is that it names the specific date for the end: December 21, 2012."⁷¹

As we have seen in this article, the Maya apparently *didn't* believe that December 21 (or December 23), 2012,

would usher in the end of the world. However, some people who saw a chance to make a quick buck from peoples' gullibility — or else, some sincerely misled people — have promoted this erroneous notion about the Maya and their Long Count calendar cycle.

We agree with Mark Hitchcock, who, after surveying several different views regarding the meaning of this supposed "Maya doomsday," says:

"[The view] I hold, is that 2012 will bring neither global catastrophe nor global enlightenment. ... The vast majority of scientists, archaeologists, and anthropologists reject the 2012 doomsday theory. ... End date 2012 simply doesn't hold up to serious scrutiny. Anne Pyburn, an anthropologist at Indiana University who studies the Maya, says bluntly, 'I don't pay any attention to this stuff because it's bunk.'"⁷²

The year 2012 will undoubtedly hold its share of surprises, but don't get caught up in the end-of-the-world hysteria or panic. Even the committed 2012 followers can't agree on what's going to happen. Their theories range from the end of the world to some new plane of awareness. There's a big difference between apocalypse and a new spiritual awareness. Any prediction with such a wide range of possible scenarios should be viewed with skepticism and caution.

When Jesus gave His final great discourse to His disciples in Matthew 24-25, He listed many of the key signs of the end times, and the very first thing He said was, "See to it that no one misleads you" (Matthew 24:4). The chief sign of the times is surging deception. The New Age 2012 eschatology is a part of this deception.

Endnotes:

1. Alternatively, it could end on December 23, 2012. "Scholars propose several *correlations* between the Maya and modern calendars; the two most-accepted differ by two days." The GMT Correlation has the end date of the Maya calendar as Decem-

ber 21, 2012. The GMT+2 Correlation has the end date as December 23, 2012. Mark Van Stone, "Part IV — Appendix: Technicalities of the Calendars." Document available at: www.famsi.org/research/vanstone/2012/2012Part4.pdf. Slide #39, italics in original. Most material I have seen regarding the Maya end date simply *assumes* the December 21, 2012 (i.e., the GMT Correlation) end date.

2. Lloyd B. Hildebrand, 2012: *Is This the End?* Alachua, Fla.: Bridge-Logos, 2009, pg. 5, italics in original. This book is written by a Christian author and publisher, and is well-designed and well-written and makes for interesting reading. However, I regret that I can only recommend it for knowing *what various popular theories* are regarding 2012 being the end of the world. Several things make this book an undesirable choice for *evaluating* 2012 doomsday theories: The book seems too credulous regarding popular theories about a 2012 doomsday event. It also seems to repeat popular theories uncritically, passing along some inaccurate information in the process. Very importantly, the author also seems to regard the Bible as only slightly more authoritative than prophecies given by various non-Christian cultures, pagan religions, occultic sources, and prophecies of questionable origin. Finally, the author doesn't give a clear answer to the question posed by the book's title.

3. Lee Penn, "The Mayan Apocalypse of 2012," *SCP Journal*, Vol. 32:4-33:1, 2009, pg. 5, italic in original.

4. Mark Hitchcock, 2012, *The Bible, and the End of the World*. Eugene, Ore: Harvest House Publishers, 2009, pg. 31. This is unquestionably the best book I have seen on the possibility of a 2012 doomsday given from a sane, Christian perspective. I heartily recommend it.

5. *Ibid.*, pg. 32.

6. "Part IV — Appendix: Technicalities of the Calendars," *op. cit.*, Slide #1, italics and bold type in original.

7. *Ibid.*, Slide #6, italics and bold type in original.

8. *Ibid.*, Slide #7, italics and bold type in original.

9. *Ibid.*, Slide #22, italics and bold type in original.

10. David Morrison, "Update on the Nibiru 2012 Doomsday," *Skeptical Inquirer*, Vol. 33, No. 6, pg. 57.

11. 2012, *The Bible, and the End of the World*, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16, 61-62.

12. "The Mayan Apocalypse of 2012," *op. cit.*, pp. 5-10.

13. 2012, *The Bible, and the End of the World*, *op. cit.*, pg. 16. See Synthia Andrews and Colin Andrews, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to 2012*. New York: Alpha Books, 2008, pp. 153-154, where the words and phrases that

Hitchcock has in quotation marks (as well as some of the information he gives) seems to have come.

14. Alexandra Bruce, *2012: Science or Superstition*. New York: The Disinformation Company Ltd., 2009, pg. 157.

15. *2012: Is This the End?*, op. cit., back cover.

16. For more on the Bible code, see G. Richard Fisher, "The Bible Code: Prophetic Insight or Fertile Imagination?" *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1998, pp. 4, 9-13.

17. *2012, The Bible, and the End of the World*, op. cit., pp. 81-82. Hitchcock references Michael Drosnin, *The Bible Code*. New York: Touchstone, 1997, pp. 153-154.

18. *Ibid.*, pg. 83, italics in original.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-86.

20. *Ibid.*, pg. 88.

21. *Ibid.*, pg. 85.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

23. James J. Drummey, *Catholic Replies*. Norwood, Mass.: C.R. Publications, 1995, pp. 77-78, brackets in original.

24. Rev. Peter M.J. Stravinskias, editor, *Catholic Dictionary*, revised edition. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 2002, pg. 619, s.v. "Prophecies of St. Malachy." Except for space constraints, other contemporary sources, both Roman Catholic and secular, could be cited here supporting this same view that the prophecies are "forgeries."

25. Interested readers can check out the so-called "prophecies of St. Malachy" for themselves in *The Prophecies of St. Malachy: Introduction and Commentary by Peter Bander*. Rockford, Ill.: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., 1973. Originally published in 1969 by Colin Smythe, Ltd., Gerrards Cross Buckinghamshire, England under the title, *The Prophecies of St. Malachy and St. Columbkille*.

26. *Catholic Replies*, op. cit., pg. 78.

27. *Ibid.*

28. For more on Nostradamus and his prophecies, see M. Kurt Goedelman, "The Tarnished Prophet of the 16th Century: The Legacy of Nostradamus," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1998, pp. 4, 13-17. An older, shorter article, also from PFO, is Keith A. Morse, "A 20th-Century Look at Nostradamus: Was He God's Prophet During the 16th Century?," *PFO Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 5, 7.

29. A very useful trait for a would-be prophet.

30. Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998, pg. 63.

31. *Ibid.*, pg. 64.

32. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1993, Vol. 8, pg. 803, s.v., "Nostradamus."

33. *Catholic Replies*, op. cit., pg. 425.

34. *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Interna-

tional edition. Danbury, Conn.: Grolier, Incorporated, 1997, Vol. 20, pg. 484, s.v., "Nostradamus," emphasis added.

35. Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions: The Road to Armageddon?* New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998, pp. 188-189, italic in original. For the source of the remarks made by James Randi, Abanes cites "James Randi, interview on *Larry King Live*, September 21, 1990; cf. Russell Chandler, *Doomsday*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant, 1993, pg. 67." Abanes' book devotes an entire chapter to Nostradamus and to debunking his prophecies.

36. B.J. Oropeza, *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994, pg. 131. The Scripture reference that Oropeza partially gives is Deuteronomy 18:9-14.

37. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to 2012*, op. cit., pg. 161.

38. *Ibid.*, pg. 162.

39. *Ibid.*, pg. 161.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162. For further evidence of these authors' magical view of thinking, see pg. 253.

42. For more information on *The Secret*, see J. Greg Sheryl, "Do You Want to Know The Secret?," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2007, pp. 1, 11-21.

43. See Gary E. Gilley, "The New Look of the Prosperity Gospel - Joel Osteen Offers You Your Best Life Now," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2010, pp. 1, 16-21.

44. David Morrison, "The Myth of Nibiru and the End of the World in 2012," *Skeptical Inquirer*, Vol. 32, No. 5, pg. 51.

45. "Update on the Nibiru 2012 Doomsday," op. cit., pp. 57-58.

46. "The Mayan Apocalypse of 2012," op. cit., pg. 9, italics, bold type, and brackets in original. Penn references the book, Lawrence E. Joseph, *Apocalypse 2012*. New York: Broadway Books, 2008. The quotations he references above from that book are, in order, pp. 32-33, 33, and 35-36. He gives "The Milky Way Galaxy" as his source for the distance to the center of our galaxy (i.e., 26,000-28,000 light-years). Document available at: <http://seds.org/messier/more/mw>.

47. "The Myth of Nibiru and the End of the World in 2012," op. cit., pg. 52, quotation in source rendered in italics.

48. *Ibid.*, quotation in source rendered in italics.

49. *Ibid.*, pg. 54, quotation in source rendered in italics.

50. *Ibid.*, quotation in source rendered in italics.

51. *Ibid.*, pg. 55, quotation in source rendered in italics.

52. *Ibid.* Concerning some of the events he mentions here, bear in mind that he wrote this article in 2008.

53. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to 2012*, op. cit., pg. 85.

54. *Ibid.*, pg. 86.

55. Hugh Ross, "Response to 2012 Prophecies." Document available at: www.reasons.org/response-2012-prophecies.

56. "RTB Response to the Motion Picture '2012,'" emphasis added. Document available at: www.reasons.org/2012.

57. "The Myth of Nibiru and the End of the World in 2012," op. cit., pg. 55.

58. "or August 12 [3114 B.C.], or August 13," as stated in *The Complete Idiot's Guide to 2012*, op. cit., pg. 74.

59. Mark Van Stone, "It's Not the End of the World: What the Ancient Maya Tell Us About 2012." Document available at: www.famsi.org/research/vanstone/2012/index.html. This website contains much extremely helpful information regarding the Maya and the 2012 doomsday issue.

60. Mark Van Stone, "2012 FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)," emphasis added. Document available at: www.famsi.org/research/vanstone/2012/faq.html.

61. Whether or not the Christian world at large expected Jesus to return in A.D. 1000 is a matter of some scholarly disagreement. For a discussion of this debate, see *End-Time Visions: The Road to Armageddon?*, op. cit., pp. 170-174.

62. "2012 FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)," op. cit., emphasis added.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *2012: Science or Superstition*, op. cit., pg. 12, capitalization and italics in original.

65. Christine Brouwer, "Will the World End in 2012?," article dated July 3, 2008. Document available at: <http://abcnews.go.com/print?id=5301284>.

66. G. Jeffrey MacDonald, "Does Maya calendar predict 2012 apocalypse?," article dated March 27, 2007. Document available at: www.usatoday.com/tech/science/2007-03-27-maya-2012_n.htm.

67. Andrew Marantz, "How to Sell an Apocalypse," article dated November 1, 2009, italics in original. Document available at <http://nymag.com/news/intelligencer/61745/>.

68. "Response to 2012 Prophecies," op. cit., italic in original.

69. *2012, The Bible, and the End of the World*, op. cit., pg. 15. Hitchcock here references Lisa Miller, "2012: A Y2K for the New Age," *Newsweek*, May 11/May 18, 2009, pg. 12, (see pg. 175, note #6).

70. One definition of "eschatology" is "the branch of theology dealing with the end of the world or of humanity," *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 3rd edition, s.v. "eschatology."

71. *2012, The Bible, and the End of the World*, op. cit., pg. 80.

72. *Ibid.*, pg. 63. The quotation Hitchcock cites here is from Lisa Miller, "2012: A Y2K for the New Age," op. cit., pg. 12, (see pg. 180, note #44).