

## The End of the World

### *The First Wise Man, Part 5*

#### *Daniel 2 & 7*

According to an ancient Mayan calendar, December 21, 2012 was supposed to be the end of the world. Of course it wasn't – and I'm speaking in the past tense even though this Friday hasn't occurred yet.

My total confidence is based on the timeline presented in the Bible regarding the end of the world. The earth is certainly headed for total destruction, but it won't be this Friday.

According to the Mayan's calendar, the end of a 5,000 year cycle ends on December 21<sup>st</sup> – and what happens next is anyone's guess.

Even without this particular ancient calendar, the majority of our world believes something bad is brewing.

The headlines of a recent USA caught my attention recently; the article talked about the growing movement of prepping – people preparing for survival in a world where catastrophes take mankind back to living in caves and fighting over fire and water.

Once viewed as a practice for survivalists on the fringe, this movement is becoming mainstream.<sup>i</sup>

One bestselling book by a former Army Intelligence Officer is entitled, "How to Survive the End of the World as we Know It". More than 130,000 people read his blog every day to glean more survival tips from contributing authors and specialists.<sup>ii</sup>

According to this USA article, 25 million people – from California to China are making some sort of small term, or long term plans to survive the coming doomsday – whether it's global hurricanes that destroy power grids; solar storms that destroy earth's surface or perhaps super volcano eruptions.

Sources like Newsweek, US News and World Report, ABC, Fox News, AOL News and more are recording the growing phenomenon of prepping for some kind of global catastrophe.

One prepper, a highly educated chemist who worked for years for an oil company, quit his job to stockpile supplies to survive the coming horror. He was quoted on ABC news, "We will have to start an entire civilization from scratch."<sup>iii</sup>

Doomsday announcements have been around for centuries.

And, by the way, there is a kernel of truth in it all – as I'll show you in our study. The time of Tribulation will be a time more horrific than one can imagine. Eruptions, tsunamis, epidemics, resulting famine, contaminated water sources will converge on planet earth.

But it won't be brought on by earth passing over the equator of the Milky Way, according to the Mayans.

The coming time of judgment on earth will be brought about by the hand of God.

Deep in the heart of man there is a rumbling of conscience (Romans 2) and the knowledge of a Creator God (Romans 1) and a history full of reminders that God's warnings were true after all.

The reason the human heart carries within it a sense of coming doom is because it is indeed coming.

Unfortunately, the doomsday experts, especially in these days, distract people's attention away from the true judgment that they really need to think about, and they end up stockpiling vegetable seeds and guns instead.

But the truth remains, mankind knows – he senses – the earth won't last much longer as we

know it. The oldest surviving doomsday prediction was found by archeologists on an Assyrian clay tablet that read, “There are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end.”<sup>iv</sup>

The Montanists were probably the first organized end-of-the-world movement. In the first century they claimed special knowledge from God that the world was going to end and they waited in Central Turkey for it to occur.

Pope Innocent III added 666 years to the date the Muslim religion began and predicted Christ would come in the year 1284.

London astrologers in 1524 predicted a great flood that would sweep through their city and more than 20,000 people abandoned their homes and waited for the coming apocalypse, which didn’t happen.

In 1792 the Shaker movement predicted the end of the world.

In 1914, the Jehovah’s Witnesses began their series of unfulfilled predictions – 1914, 1915, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975 and 1994.

In 1994, Harold Camping predicted the Lord’s return; all sorts of amazing numerology added up the years; only recently he spent tens of millions of dollars advertising and warning the world that Jesus was going to rapture the church on May 21, 2011 and the earth was going to be destroyed by tsunamis and earthquakes and a host of other natural disasters. Human history was about to end on planet earth.<sup>v</sup>

When it didn’t happen in May, he revised his dates to October 21, 2011.

Hundreds of thousands of people took notice – many people believed him, quit their jobs, and sold everything they had to warn the world.

One of the more tragic outcomes was among the Hmong believers who gathered near the border of Laos to wait for the rapture; they exposed their lives to danger from their communist government. Many were captured, several pastors ended up being martyred as the day failed to rapture them away.

Listen, for starters, you can be absolutely sure that if somebody predicts the date of Christ’s return that they’re going to be wrong, simply because Jesus Himself said that **“you do not know the day or the hour (Matthew 25:13). It’s not for you to know the specific time (Acts 1:7)**

Instead, we are to live like the Thessalonian believers – and the believers on the Island of Crete – looking every day for His appearing. Working with our hands . . . doing our jobs . . . serving as His

witnesses to our world which is indeed heading for a terrible judgment.

God has **not** told us through scripture everything about the future we’d like to know – but it does tell us everything we need to know, to get ready for it.

In a very real way, the Christian is the ultimate ‘prepper’ . . . he is truly prepared . . . but it has nothing to do with storing chickens, grains and guns – it has to do with our eternal soul and life in the coming new heavens and new earth.

The question remains, have we been given anything in the Bible that allows us to anticipate the end of the world?

Daniel, the first wise man of Babylon would answer yes.

In **Daniel chapter 2 and chapter 7** we’re given a progression of world empires, beginning with Babylon that would rule much of the world.

If you turn to **Daniel 2**, you’ll notice the four kingdoms that Daniel interprets for King Nebuchadnezzar.

He says, in **verse 31**, we read, **“You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. 32. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33. Its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. 34. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands struck the statue on its feet – that is, at the point of the last kingdom mixed with iron and clay – and this stone crushed them all.**

This stone is a reference to the stone the builders rejected (Matthew 21:42) – it’s a reference to the returning Messiah – who, Daniel prophecies here will crush these kingdoms as He sets up his own kingdom – **the end of verse 35 tells us His kingdom will – literally fill the whole earth.**

Now how do we know these different parts of the statue were kingdoms?

Let me summarize Daniel’s interpretation: the last part of **verse 38** reveals that Babylon is the head of gold – and indeed, it was the first world empire – the head of gold.

But Daniel goes on to interpret **in verse 39** that Babylon will be followed by **a second kingdom** – a kingdom identified in Daniel chapter 5 as the Medes and the Persians – this is the silver kingdom.

Following them is a third kingdom of bronze, **verse 39, which will rule over all the earth.**

We know from history that the kingdom of Greece, under Alexander the Great, defeated the Persian Empire.

Then along comes a fourth kingdom in **verse 40, made of iron.** But that kingdom will become divided we're told in **verse 41** and by the time you get down to the feet of this great statue, you've gone from a unified kingdom of gold to a diverse mixed kingdom of iron and clay.

And with that, Daniel effectively prophesied – and history proved it true – the progression of world empires.

In fact, his prophecy even stretches to the very end of the church age.

If you turn over to **chapter 7**, we're given a different vision, which agrees with the vision of the statue, but adds some important elements to the prophecy.

He refers to these same 4 kingdoms, using four different animals, but then he also adds information about the Antichrist's kingdom and finally the kingdom of God.

**Notice verse 3. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. 4. The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle.**

This is the first kingdom of Babylon. Winged lions were practically the national symbol of ancient Babylon. In fact, sculptures of huge winged lions stood at the entrances of Babylonian royal palaces.<sup>vi</sup>

The second kingdom of the Medes and the Persians here in **verse 5** is pictured as a bear. We're shown in the latter part of **verse 5**, that the bear has **three ribs in its mouth between its teeth.**

Those three ribs represent the fact that this kingdom – the kingdom of the Medes and Persians conquered Lydia, Egypt and Babylon – these are the three crushed ribs in the bear's mouth.

The third kingdom, which would be Greece, also agrees entirely with the vision of the statue in chapter 2 – is shown here in **verse 6 to be a leopard with four wings.**

The wings refer to the swiftness of this kingdom – in fact, we know from history that the Greek army under Alexander the Great conquered the known world faster than any earlier ancient power. In just 8 years, they marched and conquered more than 11,000 miles of territory, from Greece to India.<sup>vii</sup>

It's also significant that this leopard has 4 heads, because after Alexander's untimely death at the age of 32, his kingdom was divided into four parts, each part led by one of his generals.

Now, what comes next is a great and terrifying beast – **verse 7 – with iron teeth**; an obvious reference back to the vision of the statue and the iron legs – the Roman Empire.

Daniel explains in **verse 7b. it devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it and it had ten horns.**

What Daniel also slips in here is information about the latter stages of this Roman Empire – what evangelical scholars call the revival of the Roman or western Empire.

Instead of talking about ten toes of a statue, from Daniel chapter 2, Daniel now speaks of 10 horns emerging on the head of this last world empire.

And we're not left to wonder what these 10 horns were. This is not a reference to the brass section of the orchestra.

Look down **at verse 24. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom (this Roman kingdom) ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.**

In other words, this empire is a 10 kingdom coalition.

Verse 24 also tells us that an 11<sup>th</sup> king comes along and kills three of the 10 kings and takes their place. But that's just the start of his rampage.

Notice **verse 25. He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints – the believers – of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law – in other words, he'll try to become a world dictator over everyone else – now notice, and the will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time – or, for 3 ½ years. However, verse 26, his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. 27. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.**

Okay . . . are you out of breath yet?

Daniel has just prophesied a number of events – did they come true?

1. First, Babylon will be the first world empire – check
2. The Medes and the Persians will conquer Babylon – check
3. Greece will conquer Persia – check
4. Rome will conquer Greece – check
5. A new Roman empire will be led by 10 kings – oh, that hasn't happened yet.
6. One ruler will blaspheme God and attempt to kill all those who follow Him as he dominates the world scene; the Bible refers to him as the Antichrist. – that hasn't happened yet.
7. Finally, the Antichrist will be overthrown when the Messiah returns to set up His kingdom on earth – that hasn't happened yet.

Now some would say, “Christ already came and established His kingdom in our hearts.” In a sense, that's true – He should be the Lord of our lives right now.

But in a prophetic sense, that isn't true. In fact, if you back up to **verse 13**, we're given a description of Messiah's coming.

***I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming.***

Stop for a moment – who could this be?

He's referred to as someone like **a Son of Man** – that means he's the offspring of the human race; but He's like a Son of Man, meaning He's more than human.

He's coming to earth **on the clouds** – an Old Testament allusion to the fact that the clouds are the chariots of God (**Isaiah 19:1 and Psalm 104:3**) – so this person isn't just a man, He's deity.<sup>viii</sup>

So Daniel is describing a person descending to earth to reign who happens to be deity clothed in humanity.

Who could that be?

“Who are you?” – the Supreme Court of Israel asked Jesus before condemning Him to die – “Tell us if you really are the Son of God? And Jesus said, ***You have said it . . . and you*** – the nation Israel – ***shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.***” (**Matthew 26:64**). He said, “That's me!”

And they cried, “Put Him to death for claiming to be God incarnate.”

And they murdered Him . . . but that was part of His plan – for the Messiah came first to be born, so that He could ultimately suffer and die for our sins.

Isaiah writes, ***But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our wellbeing fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.*** (**Isaiah 53:5-6**)

Oh but this here in Daniel chapter 7 and verse 13 is his triumphant, second coming to earth.

Let me put these pieces together:

- Following the coalition of a 10 kingdom western world empire;
- following the rule of Antichrist who for 3 ½ years who will begin his rise to power by establishing peace in Israel;
- following another 3 ½ years where he will desecrate the Temple, attempt to kill the Jews along with those who follow the true King, and demand worship as a god –
- following this, the King will return with His beloved bride and after defeating the antichrist gather all the saints who've come to faith in Him during these days of horrific catastrophe and judgment –
- He will gather and reconstitute His wayward nation, Israel, who now receives Him back in genuine sorrow and lasting repentance.

This is all yet to happen.

And Daniel sees the inauguration of his incredible Kingdom of Messiah – look at **Daniel 7:13 again – and He, the Son of Man, came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him.**

Stop and imagine this scene taking place in heaven; The Messiah (God the Son) approaches the Ancient of Days (God the Father) – by the way, revealing two distinct person in this singular Godhead; and the Father hand the scepter as it were to the Son and says, “Now it's time . . . set up the Kingdom of the Most High on earth.”

We know from the Book of Revelation that this kingdom of our Lord (as we reign with Him), will last 1,000 years while Satan is bound in the abyss (**Revelation 20:1-3**).

We're also told that after 1,000 years, Satan will be released and will gather an army of unbelievers – imagine, they lived during the millennial kingdom on earth with trusting in Christ.

They enjoyed the Kingdom without ever believing in the King.

And Christ will destroy this massive army, send Satan to Hell, destroy the earth, judge the entire history of the human race that did not believe in him before a Great White Throne (*Revelation 20:13*).

After that final judgment, He will create a new heaven and a new earth which we will enjoy forever – *Revelation 21* describes it.

Now if that overview was too fast, if you'd like to do a slower study, we went through the entire Book of Revelation and it took us 3 years.

And we finished it before the Rapture . . . many were surprised by that.

The Mayan's of the first century were obsessed with calendars – and they were brilliant astronomers. They determined a sacred calendar which followed the movements of Venus. They created a solar calendar and charted the movements of the moon and the sun. They actually calculated the length of the lunar month to be 29.532020 days – within 34 seconds of what we now know to be its actual length. And they came within 34 seconds of the correct time without telescopes, computers, calculators or stopwatches.<sup>ix</sup>

They were incredibly brilliant at calculating the months and the years – but they could not calculate, nor can anyone, the end of the world.

Based upon the prophecies of Scripture, we know that the earth will be destroyed and a new one created but only after the thousand year kingdom of Christ.

We know that the kingdom of Christ on will be preceded by 7 years of tribulation, brought on, not by terrorists or tsunami's, but by the hand of God in judgment upon the human race.

So I can say with entire confidence that the world will not be destroyed, nor the normal ecosystems that the Bible clearly speaks of all the way to that end – I can clearly say that the world will not end for at least another 1,007 years – from today.

But maybe that countdown will start today with the rapture of the church.

In this USA article on Preppers, the saddest thing I read was one man who said that because of his Christian faith, he has turned into an evangelist, urging people to prepare for the coming catastrophes with extra water, food, clothes, a thumb drive of your financial information and other essentials.

Listen, there's nothing wrong with preparing for a power outage; or a flood.

That kind of prepping might be common sense preparation.

But these preppers who are preparing to rebuild the human race after a series of unknown disasters, are missing the larger issue; their Christian faith in uninformed by Christian prophecy.

We are evangelists, but our message is to prepare your heart by faith in Christ for the rapture of the church which could happen today. (I Thessalonians 4 informs us that the next event on the prophetic calendar is Jesus, sweeping upward His bride, saving them as promised from the wrath of God upon the earth, described over more than 13 chapters in the Book of Revelation);

We are evangelists are telling people that they are appointed to die and after that the judgment.

Like Daniel to Belshazzar, we are evangelists warning people that the meal they just ate just might be their last one.

Here's what you ought to be prepping for . . . here's what we know, according to biblical prophecy – let me review:

1. First, the world will not be destroyed on December 21, 2012 or any other day someone predicts.
2. Secondly, we know that Jesus will not return to set up His kingdom until after a period of tribulation takes place, lasting 7 years.
3. Thirdly, we know that there are no prophecies that need to be fulfilled before Jesus calls His church upward in the rapture. The word rapture is the Latin verb, "caught up" where Paul referred to the church being caught up to meet the Lord in the air. (I Thessalonians 4:17)
4. Fourthly, we know that only after the church is with the Lord, will the unremitting judgments of God's wrath will pour down upon the human race (Revelation 3:10 contains the promise to the church that she will be removed – taken out of the way of – out and away from the presence of the wrath of God; and as the Tribulation opens on earth, the redeemed are shown singing before the throne of God in chapter 5.
5. We know, fifthly, that following the Tribulation period, Jesus Christ, the Messiah will come down to earth the second time, with His beloved, to set up His kingdom;

He only came to the clouds to rapture the church – He will come back to earth, in His second coming to establish His kingdom.

6. Sixth, this kingdom will rule over the human race that survived the Tribulation and believed in Christ – in fact, we're told in Revelation 14 that those who hear and believe will represent every tongue, tribe and nation on earth.

And Christ will establish His kingdom, seen by this first wise man, Daniel, in his amazing visions.

Here's more of what we know about that future Kingdom on earth – where Christ and his saints reign together on planet earth: at least 5 characteristics of the coming kingdom:

### 1. It will be a time of great peace.

The prophet *Isaiah 2:4* tells us that *the nations will beat their swords into ploughs and will not learn the art of war.*

### 2. It will be a time of great glory

The radiant glory of God will be manifested in Messiah's kingdom (*Isaiah 35 and Ezekiel 43*)

### 3. It will be a time of great worship.

The lyrics of our unified voices, along with 100 million angels described by the Apostle John, will sing – *To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, by blessing and honor and glory and power for ever and ever. (Revelation 5:13).*

### 4. It will be a time of great prosperity and health.

We're told that anyone who dies at the age of 100 would be considered a young person dying prematurely (*Isaiah 65:20*); we told that the healing power of our King will cure diseases, weaknesses and deformities.

*Isaiah 29:18* says *the deaf will hear and the blind will see in that kingdom;*

He says further in *chapter 33* that *no resident in the kingdom will ever say, "I'm feeling sick."*

We, the immortals, will reign over millions of people who enjoy the kingdom of Christ on earth for a thousand years (*Revelation 20*) – a time of unparalleled prosperity and health at last.

### 5. Finally, number 5, the kingdom will be a time of great joy.

The people will be glad in the presence of Christ – with gladness like in the times of harvest (*Isaiah 9:3*).

For a child will be born to us; a son will be given to us – and that happened at his first coming; and the government will rest on His shoulders – *verse 6 and in verse 7 – He will sit on the throne of David. And His name is what? Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaac Watts, Sr. was a deacon and a clothier in England during the mid-1600's. He was a non-Anglican dissenter, which was considered treasonous in those days and was eventually arrested. About the time he went to jail, for a brief period of time, his wife Sarah delivered their son, Isaac – named after his father.

In time, Isaac Sr. was released from prison and he and Sarah noticed that their son loved rhyme and verse. At the age of seven he wrote some prose, using his name as an acrostic – I-S-A-A-C.

- I – I am a vile polluted lump of earth
- S – So I've continued ever since my birth
- A – Although Jehovah grace does give me
- A – As sure this monster Satan will deceive me
- C – Come, Lord, from Satan's claws relieve me.

After returning home from college at the age of 19, he complained to his father about the dismal, monotonous singing in the church. Only versified arrangements of the Psalms were allowed; Martin Luther taught his followers to sing hymns, but John Calvin only allowed the singing of Scriptures.

It was quite a debate. Music always has been. Unfortunately, what God intended to unite us, often divides us.

Well, after a heated discussion, his father challenged young Isaac to write a hymn and see if he could do better.

So he did – he wrote this first hymn – and the church asked him to write a new one every week; he would go on to write 600 more.<sup>x</sup>

One of his most popular hymns, and to this day sung around the world at Christmas time is entitled *Joy to the World*.

But Isaac wasn't thinking about Christ's first coming, he was actually thinking about His second

coming and the kingdom reign of Christ on earth. Because Isaac alludes to the fact that we need to make room for Christ, the church too quickly assumed the subject was the incarnation.

But the subject was actually the kingdom. It doesn't matter; frankly, it's a great hymn to sing at Christmas and all the year round.

But to Isaac Watts, the kingdom was a time of unparalleled joy.

The lyrics go like this:

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare  
Him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven  
and nature sing.*

*Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns;  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains;  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy.*

Here's Daniel's prophecy in song:

*He rules the world with truth and grace;  
And makes the nations prove;  
The glories of His righteousness, and wonders of His  
love;  
And wonders of His love.*

My friend, make sure you've placed your faith in Jesus Christ – the coming King today. The hour of His coming is closer than ever.

There are a lot of things about the future we can't know, but there is one thing you can know.

John wrote, ***These things have I written unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God, that you might know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13) That you might know . . .***

Listen, you can't know the hour of Christ's coming but you can know that He's coming for you!

You can't know the year of His kingdom but you can know you'll reign with Him the year it begins.

And that Kingdom will be a time of great joy.

That very first hymn written by Isaac Watts again focused on the coming kingdom.

I close with two of those stanzas, which read:

*Now to the Lamb that once was slain  
Be endless blessings paid;  
Salvation, glory, joy remain, forever on Thy head.*

*Thou hast redeemed our souls with blood,  
Hast set the prisoner free;  
Hast made us kings and priests to God,  
And we shall reign with Thee.*

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 12/16/2012 by Stephen Davey.

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i USA Today, "For Preppers, Every Day Could be Doomsday". November 13, 2012

ii Ibid

iii Mark Hitchcock, 2012: The Bible and the End of the World (Harvest House, 2009), p. 47

iv Ibid, p. 102

v Ibid, 102

vi Renald Showers, The Most High God (Friends of Israel, 2002), p. 75

vii Ibid, p. 78

viii Showers, p. 80

ix Hitchcock, p. 31

x Robert J. Morgan, Then Sings My Soul (Thomas Nelson, 2003), p. 31