

“The Sky is Falling!”

By Paul R. Blake

Most of us remember Henny Penny, also known as Chicken Little, a folk tale with a moral about a chicken who believes the world is coming to an end. The phrase "The sky is falling!" appears often in the story, and has become an idiom representing a hysterical, mistaken belief that disaster is imminent. Versions of the story go back more than 2500 years. Well, Henny Penny is back again in the news and on the Internet shouting that the world is coming to an end on Friday, December 21, 2012, when the Mesoamerican Long Count calendar comes to the end of its current baktun cycle.

We also remember what Jesus said about such panicked and pedestrian prophecies: "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it... But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. 24:23-26, 36).

Follow me back to May 21, 2011 when Harold Egbert Camping, an American Christian Broadcasting preacher, prophesied that it would be Judgment Day. Then it was moved to October 21, 2011. And, it didn't come that day, either. Harold retired on October 16, 2011. According to reporters: "Camping admitted in a private interview that he no longer believed that anybody could know the time of the Rapture or the end of the world, in stark contrast to his previously staunch position on the subject. In March 2012, he stated that his attempt to predict a date was 'sinful', and that his critics had been right in pointing to the words of Matthew 24:36: 'of that day and hour knoweth no man'. He added that he was now searching the Bible 'even more fervently... not to find dates, but to be more faithful in understanding.'" (*Harold Camping Exclusive: Family Radio Founder Retires – Christian Post. October 24, 2011. "Letter from Harold Camping to the 'Family Radio Family'". Charisma News. March 7, 2012.*)

From Theudas in 44 AD to Harold Camping in 2011, there have been 232 published prophecies of the end of the world that did not come to pass... obviously. This does not mean that the world will not end; it means that men do not have the power to predict it. John wrote: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1John 4:1).

Since no man knows what day the Lord will return, it seems unlikely that He will come on a day that men are predicting and tentatively expecting. Jesus continued to speak on this: "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:37-39). When He comes, it will be a day when humankind will not be looking for Him.

Doomsday 12-21-12 advocates are for the most part backing away from their predictions. For years they spoke of a galactic alignment that was supposed to create tidal forces that would tear apart the planet. Turns out the alignment will have so little impact it will not be measurable with our finest instruments. Then they spoke of a comet/asteroid impact that would be a "planet-killer". But, there are none that will intersect earth's orbit in the foreseeable future. Some proposed a gamma burst from a nearby star, but the odds of that happening on a predicted date are astronomical (no pun intended).

In truth, the Mayans never intended for their calendar to mark the end of the world. It's just a calendar; when the count of years comes to an end, there is a celebration, the calendar is reset, and the count begins again. It is no more a sign for the end of the world than is a New Year's Eve party.

“Misinterpretation of the Mesoamerican Long Count calendar is the basis for a popular belief that a cataclysm will take place on December 21, 2012. December 21, 2012 is simply the day that the calendar will go to the next b'ak'tun, at Long Count 13.0.0.0.0. The date on which the calendar will go to the next piktun (a complete series of 20 b'ak'tuns), at Long Count 1.0.0.0.0.0, will be on October 13, 4772. Sandra Noble, executive director of the Mesoamerican research organization Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. (FAMSI), notes that ‘for the ancient Maya, it was a huge celebration to make it to the end of a whole cycle.’ She considers the portrayal of December 2012 as a doomsday or cosmic-shift event to be ‘a complete fabrication and a chance for a lot of people to cash in.’” (*Wikipedia*)

God has told His people from the beginning to pay no regard to these false prophets: “And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:21). The Son of God said no man knows the day of His return. Anyone who says differently is a false prophet to whom we pay no attention.

“But Paul, what if it is the end of the world?!” Are you a faithful Christian walking in the light and prepared for the coming of the Lord? If so, then what if it is the end of the world? We would get to go to Heaven and live in a place where there is no fear of a Heaven-ending cataclysm. Only those who are not prepared for the Judgment need fear the end of the world. “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1Thes. 4:16-17).

Well, Apophis, a near earth orbit asteroid, is due to pass close to the earth on April 13, 2036 with a one in 250,000 chance of hitting the planet. What are the odds the false prophets and panic mongers will be running around predicting the end of the world again?

A Moments Wisdom

--God is God. Because He is God, He is worthy of my trust and obedience. I will find rest nowhere but in His holy will, a will that is unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what He is up to.

--Keep praying, but be thankful that God's answers are wiser than your prayers.

--I have found that there are three stages in every great work of God: first, it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done.

--When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer.

--Those who are readiest to trust God without other evidence than His Word always receive the greatest number of visible evidences of His love.

--Trust the past to God's mercy, the present to God's love and the future to God's providence.