

2012: Is The Sky Really Falling?

Probe's former intern Dave Sterrett and Steve Lee of Prestonwood Christian Academy (Plano TX) planned to publish a book about the 2012 buzz. After interviewing a number of Ph.D.s who are experts in Maya studies, astronomy, astrobiology, theology and New Testament, they concluded that the hype is "much ado about nothing."

The ancient Mesoamerican culture of the Maya had a meticulous calendar that abruptly ends on December 21, 2012. Many so-called scholars and believers think that either the world is going to end, as the recently released movie *2012* depicts, or humanity will move into a new age of enlightenment that will elevate us into a higher state of being or consciousness. The prediction of this "end of the world" or "end of the age" phenomenon has morphed into a multifaceted issue ranging from Maya studies, astronomy, New Age, to biblical studies.

The Hype:

Lawrence E. Joseph, author of *Apocalypse 2012: An Investigation Into Civilization's End*, has stated that "The year 2012 will be pivotal, perhaps catastrophic, possibly revelatory, to a degree unmatched in human history." Many people have been concerned about the connection between the Maya prediction and astronomy. Some New Age advocates believe the 2012 event will bring about a higher level of consciousness. Sol Luckman, author of *Conscious Healing*, has written, "Are you aware that a Shift in human consciousness is occurring even as you read these words that employs celestial triggers such as supernovas and Earth's alignment with Galactic Center in the years leading up to 2012 to trigger the evolution of our species?"

The Reality:

We interviewed Dr. Robert Sitler, Director of the Latin American Studies program at Stetson University.

Steve and Dave: What is the Maya long calendar and what is its significance?

Dr. Sitler: The Long Count Calendar is multifaceted, It is primarily a way of establishing a specific day in lineal time, much like our own yearly calendar, The calendar surely had powerful symbolic dimensions but our current understanding of them is limited.

S&D: Does the Maya Calendar give any indication of an apocalypse, end of the world, or a great transformation that could be cataclysmic?

Dr. Sitler: The calendar itself does not indicate such things, It tells you what day it is, There is only one reference to the Dec. 21, 2012 date in the ancient hieroglyphs, Monument 6 from Tortuguero, and unfortunately, the text says very little.

S&D: Why do you think many websites and books claim that Maya predicted the end of the earth?

Dr. Sitler: Very few of these websites have substantive ties to the Maya world, and as a result, they are often extremely misinformed.

S&D: Do you see any detriment or loss to Maya studies because of the 2012 predictions?

Dr. Sitler: It's great for Maya studies in terms of drawing attention to the Maya themselves and hopefully more serious scholarship. The 2012 hype bases itself on extremes of misinformation. {1}

The Hype:

While Maya scholars such as Dr. Sitler see no legitimacy to the end of the world scenarios coming from Maya culture or calendars, many doomsday predictions have turned to astronomical studies to confirm their prophecies of a coming apocalypse. Theories such as a pole shift are propounded as likely events that will bring earth to destruction. Patrick Geryl, co-author of *The Orion Prophecy: Will the World be Destroyed in 2012? Prophecies from the Maya and the Old Egyptians*, predicts that "In 2012 the next polar reversal will take place on earth. This means that the North Pole will be changed into the South Pole. Scientifically this can only be explained by the fact that the earth will start rotating in the opposite direction, together with a huge disaster of unknown proportions. In my books I reveal the immense cataclysm that is going to torment the earth in the near future." {2}

The Reality:

Again, we went to the experts in the fields of astronomy and astrophysics. The claim that doomsday advocates are making turns out to be a bait and switch. David Morrison, the senior scientist at the NASA Astrobiology Institute, clarifies, "A reversal in the rotation of Earth is impossible. It has never happened and never will." {3}

In reality there is one thing that can be predicted with great accuracy according to Dr. Gene Byrd, professor of astronomy and astrophysics at the University of Alabama. He told us, "The only thing that is predictable is that some folks will be predicting the end of the world a few years from now and making new predictions of the end after this date [i.e., 2012] has passed."

Notes

1. Interview on July 17, 2009.
2. Patrick Geryl, "Pole Shift & Pole Reversal in 2012" survive2012.com/index.php/geryl-pole-shift.html, accessed August 29, 2009.
3. astrobiology.nasa.gov/ask-an-astrobiologist/intro/nibiru-and-doomsday-2012-questions-and-answers, accessed September 6, 2009.

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See Also:

2012: Doomsday All Over Again

Josh McDowell on Using Redeeming Darwin With Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed

Over the last 50 years, those with a Christian worldview have been the focus of condescension and exclusion in the academic community. As has happened throughout history, these attitudes from the academic community have gradually permeated our mainstream culture. Today, evangelical-bashing is the accepted standard position for all forms of mass media from news reporting to books and movies. Over the last decade, this trend has accelerated to the point that many people believe Christian principles and beliefs should not be recognized in our public policies and culture. We are all experiencing these efforts to relegate the Christian faith to an irrelevant sidelight of American culture.

One of the root causes of this trend is the teaching of naturalistic Darwinism as dogma within our public education system from grade school through our universities. The reasoning is that educated people know that science has proven there is no evidence for a creator. Therefore, there is no place for religion and moral authority in our public life. This attitude directly affects public policies on abortion, euthanasia, education, sexuality, etc.

Although Darwin's theory of life originating and evolving to its current forms strictly through random events and natural selection may have seemed plausible 50 years ago, our current understanding of the nature of the universe and the complexity of even the simplest life forms bring up huge issues for which the current state of evolutionary theory has *no* answers. For example, over 700 scientists at our universities and research institutions have signed a statement expressing their doubt that Darwinism can adequately explain our current understanding of life in this universe (See dissentfromdarwin.org for the current list).

In a desperate attempt to protect the dogma upon which their naturalistic/humanistic worldview is based, the scientific/educational establishment is systematically and viciously attacking those who would dare to research alternative theories that may better explain the current evidence. They have mounted a public relations campaign to paint any scientific research or publications which expose the issues with Darwinism as not science, but rather religiously based dogmatism or creationism. What is absolutely amazing is that while aggressively pursuing their campaign of persecution and spin-doctoring, the Darwinist community steadfastly denies that they are doing any such thing. Sadly, this campaign has been successful to date in keeping our public education system and most of our scientists captive to this worldview-motivated attempt to defend the dogma of Darwinism in the face of all evidence to the contrary.

Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed (starring Ben Stein) is a documentary scheduled to be released in April 2008. It exposes the blatant attempts to squelch academic freedom in defense of outdated Darwinist dogma. By chronicling the stories of well-qualified scientists who have dared to question Darwinism as a comprehensive explanation for life and interviewing people on both sides of these events, this documentary presents a strong case for restoring academic freedom allowing scientists to follow the evidence where it leads. Both the content and the involvement of Ben Stein (who is Jewish) make it clear that this documentary was not created to directly promote the teaching of creationism. This documentary calls Americans to stand up for academic freedom and integrity. It says that we should not allow the misguided notion that science and religion must be in conflict to keep scientists from exploring all reasonable hypotheses to explain the latest evidence.

The producers of *Expelled* are making a large financial investment to create a documentary targeted

for wide release in thousands of movie theaters. They are taking this risk because they believe that the American public needs to understand what is really happening. It is only through public awareness and pressure that the current climate of repression and persecution can be changed. *Expelled* is intended to bring this issue to the forefront of public thought. Promoting an open public debate could well lead to unshackling scientific research in this area and opening the door for students to receive more in-depth education in evolutionary theory including those areas where evolutionary theory currently has no viable explanation.

The content of *Expelled* creates a natural opportunity for Christians to discuss the evidence for a creator and the reasons for our faith in Jesus Christ as Creator and Savior. *Expelled* will draw wide public attention to these issues and will create media attention and controversy even among those who do not see it. It would be a shame for believers to miss this opportunity to promote this public discussion and to engage our friends, neighbors and co-workers in making a defense for our hope in Christ.

So how can we go about doing this?

1. Let me encourage you to take the time to review the excellent, cutting-edge materials available through RedeemingDarwin.com. Make the effort to equip your people with the information and encouragement they need to communicate that the scientific evidence points to a creator and to share the relationship they have with the Creator. Again, this foundational issue is critical and will get more intense in the days ahead. The *Redeeming Darwin* material from Probe and EvanTell is ideal for this purpose.
2. Make sure that they know that *Expelled* will bring this topic to the forefront in peoples conversation whether they have seen the documentary or not. We need to equip believers to look for opportunities to interact intelligently. You may want to make available the Viewers version of Probes Discovering the Designer DVD/booklet as a cost effective tool for your people to share with others (redeemingdarwin.com/products).
3. Encourage people to see this controversial documentary:

Expelled does not directly promote a Christian view. In fact, it does not even take the position that Intelligent Design has been shown to be a better theory than Darwinism. This helps establish a non-threatening, neutral starting point to engage in a thoughtful discussion. You are not asking people to watch a Christian film. You are encouraging them to become informed on an important issue.

Expelled is a documentary. It is not for entertainment. It will require the audience to think about what they are watching. Although it includes some humor (how could Ben Stein keep from adding humor?), it is a very serious documentary. Be sure people understand that they are attending for the purpose of learning not for a night out at the movies.

After you view the movie, you may want to think about how you could use the DVD version when it is available. If you are showing *Expelled* in a small group or some other venue, you can better focus peoples expectations.

4. Plan to offer small group opportunities to learn more about this controversy and how

it ultimately points us to Christ. Once again, the *Redeeming Darwin* material is an excellent resource for this purpose.

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Laugh a Little: It's Good For Your Health

Had a good laugh recently? Need one?

Stressful days can invite comic relief. Doctors realize that laughter can enhance physical and mental health. Now it seems even looking forward to laughter can be good for you.

WebMD reports that Lee Berk, MD, a University of California Irvine medical professor, and his associates have for years investigated how moods affect immune systems and illness. They've found laughter has a role in fighting viruses, bacteria, cancer and heart disease.

Stress can hamper your immune system; a good chuckle can help. Berk found earlier that watching a one-hour humorous video reduced stress hormone secretion and helped the immune system counter viruses and bacteria.

But there's more: Berk now says the mere anticipation of laughing can help. He studied ten men, measured their stress signs, and told them that in about three days they would see a humorous video. In each man, spirits lifted before viewing the video.

Two days before the viewing, depression was down 51 percent, confusion 36 percent, anger 19 percent, fatigue 15 percent and tension 9 percent. Right after the viewing, depression and anger were both down 98 percent, fatigue 87 percent, confusion 75 percent and tension 61 percent.

Berk feels anticipating humor brightens life and affects health. He calls this influence the "biology of hope." Berk says, "Positive anticipation of humor starts the ball rolling in a sense, in which moods begin to change in ways that help the body fight illness. We believe this shows that even anticipation can be used to help patients recover from a wide range of disorders."

Moral: Planning humor can benefit your health. Watch a funny movie, spend time with humorous people. Tell your boss, professor, clergy or club chairperson to liven up their speeches a bit if they want healthy employees, students, or members. Put laugh-breaks on your calendar, since anticipation is part of the therapy.

A Jewish proverb observes, "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Paul, a first-Century follower of Jesus, emphasized hope: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope. . . ." Those biblical writers have some good advice now and then, practical stuff for everyday life.

The other day, a friend sent what he claimed were comments from federal employee performance evaluations. Maybe because I've encountered a groundswell of administrivia-creating bureaucrats recently, some of the remarks left me roaring. . .and feeling much better. With apologies to the many capable federal workers, know anyone like this?

"Since my last report, this employee has reached rock bottom and has started to dig."

"I would not allow this employee to breed."

"This young lady has delusions of adequacy."

"He sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them."

"Got a full 6-pack, but lacks the plastic thing to hold it all together."

Those biblical writers would probably tell me to pray for those who hassle me, advice I should heed. But this laughter-break lifted my spirits and got me going again.

So, laugh more. You'll like it. And say, have you heard the one about. . .?

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