

"The End is Near"

At some time or another you have probably seen a photo, comic, or news clip showing an individual wearing a sandwich-board with the message, "The End is Near." Throughout history people have made all kinds of predictions about future events. There were false prophets in ancient times who would assure their king of peace. Magicians, sorcerers, and even priests have gained the trust of naive people and controlled them through their prophecies. In modern times, prognosticators of doom and gloom have been largely ignored.

It seems that someone is always out there with some sort of doomsday prediction. Those who lack credibility are shrugged off as frauds, and rightly so. However, some make startling predictions that seem plausible.

A respected medical journal reports that . . .
A respected science publication says that . . .
The research of a respected psychologist with many letters after his name indicates that . . .

How can we know what is truly believable?

Did you know that this problem has existed for centuries? In the Old Testament there were prophets of God who relayed God's message to man, and there were posers, those who claimed to be prophets but had not received a revelation from God. The false prophets often spoke of peace and tranquility while the prophet of God warned the people of God's judgment because of sin.

God gave the Israelites a simple way to determine whether a prophet spoke God's word or their own word: If the prophesy occurred as the prophet predicted, then they could be trusted. If the prophesy failed, the prophet was a false prophet. (Deuteronomy 18:15-22)

Modern-day prophets, fortunetellers, and seers have claimed to know the future. There have even been some who claimed to communicate with dead people who would reveal the future. (Do the dead really know the future?)

We also read about great claims about miracle cures, health scares, the economy, our future as a nation, world affairs, the environment, and even the universe.

How does anyone know for sure?

The principle God laid out for Israel is good. Our society actually seems to follow that wisdom to a great degree. For example, a number of religious zealots have predicted the end of the world on a specific date. As the date passed, their credibility was tarnished and life continued. Over time a number of dietary concerns have been proven to be negligible while others have been substantiated.

Someone predicts another great depression; another predicts an earthquake of great magnitude; yet another predicts an epidemic. These and other threats have

come and gone. In some cases new discoveries have revealed the flaw in the earlier predictions.

The problem that we face today is that so many of the claims appear to be backed up by research. It is not to say that research cannot come to valid conclusions, but rather, that there are researchers who have made bold claims with too little research or too little time to effectively come to a valid conclusion. This applies to the various branches of science, the social sciences, health and medicine, economics, etc.

Do you ever feel that you are simply at their mercy? You have no way of finding out on your own.

Although the Bible is not a health guide, science book, or a guide for economic planning, it often reveals truths that directly apply in these areas.

The key is to begin with God and let him reveal truths about man and his ways. (Our natural tendency is to think in terms of man and see if God's word fits what we think we already know.)

As an example, consider the threat of global warming. One theory concludes that the earth will become uninhabitable due to excessive heat. Another theory concludes with the end of life on earth through a worldwide freeze brought on by a change in ocean currents caused by melting icecaps. These "end of the world" theories fly in the face of God's promise to Noah:

While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease. (Genesis 8:22)

As long as the earth exists, the environmental cycles will continue as we now know them. So, it is good to take out the trash, recycle, conserve energy, and hug a tree. You are not saving the planet, you are just being responsible. God assured Noah that your children and your grandchildren can be at peace with regard to the prophecies of the extreme environmental alarmists.

Not every claim will have a clear and direct answer from scripture. But the Bible will guide us so that we will not have to live our lives in fear of the modern-day false prophets.