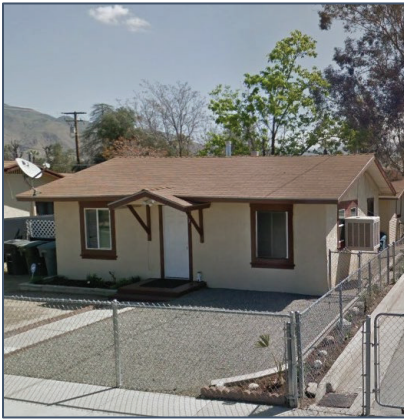




DOOMSDAY DELUSIONS

During the late 1960s I met two elderly sisters—Margaret and Ethel—who lived in San Jacinto, California. They had heard my radio program and invited me to come visit them. When I arrived at their house, I discovered it was a stone's throw—*literally*—from the place of my birth.



I would have been born in the hospital in Hemet, but it was small in those days and had filled because of a serious car accident. So the doctor came to the little house (560 square feet) my parents were renting in San Jacinto where I was born.

A building right next door was a mortuary. Many years later it was

purchased by a church, including the little house where I was born, which was then used for Sunday School classes!

After visiting a while, Margaret and Ethel explained that they liked to loan money to individuals who were active in the Lord's work. Because of verses like Deuteronomy 23:20, they did so without charging interest. As a young preacher, living by faith, this was an answer to prayer and met a distinct need I had at the time. Over the next year or so, I made monthly payments to them until they were paid back.

I have fond memories of them and will always be grateful for the way they reached out to me, financially and otherwise.

Because of some disappointments along the way, Margaret and Ethel did not attend any church on a regular basis. Instead, they were influenced by a number of radical papers they received in the mail—religious tabloids—the kind that promote extremist end-time views. There were articles implying our money system would soon fail; that government agencies were out to poison our food and water.

One article claimed a submarine, straying from its course, had ended up under San Bernardino, California—over 75 miles inland. This (supposedly) proved that southern California is hanging out over the ocean on a fragile shelf. A massive earthquake, it was claimed, would *soon* cause a large portion of California to drop into the ocean. Fish would be swimming in and about the multi-storied buildings of Los Angeles!

On one occasion, the ladies showed me an article about 50,000 Chinese soldiers who were training at a “secret” location in Mexico, preparing to invade the United States by crossing into New Mexico and Texas. Because Arizona—though it also borders Mexico—was not specifically mentioned, they felt they should

move there. Nothing I could say to them carried much weight. They liked me; but I think they felt that being young, I was pitifully *uninformed*. I simply did not understand that the end-times were upon us!

Loading up their big maroon Cadillac, these two little ladies headed to Arizona where they bought a small house at Cornville (near Sedona) in a very remote area. The house had a well, so they would not be dependent on public water.

They had not been there too long when Ethel broke her hip and they were forced to return to California where she died a few weeks later.

At that point, Margaret asked me to drive her to Sedona. She wanted to quickly draw out money from the joint bank account they had set up there—in *cash*! The bank was in a temporary manufactured building while a permanent structure was being built. I remained in the car while she went in. The thought went through my mind: this could look *suspicious*! Who is that young man sitting out there in that car?



Sedona is located in a lovely setting of red cliffs. Margaret thought it would be nice to have her sister buried there. So we checked this out. But her mother, father, and brother had long been buried in a family plot in Santa Montica, California. Fearful that California was going to slide into the ocean, she considered having them exhumed and moved to Sedona where they, along with Ethel, would all be buried together.

But a funeral director explained: moving bodies (long deceased) would be problematic; and to do so crossing state lines would present legal challenges. Margaret then agreed and asked me to do Ethel's graveside service at Santa Monica, which I did.

Well over **50** years have now passed, *California is still here*, it did not slide off into the ocean.

Within a few months I did not hear from Margaret anymore. When I finally drove to the house in San Jacinto to check on her, she had left—without telling anyone where she was going—including a close neighbor friend. Apparently she did not feel she could trust *anyone*, including me. I have wondered if she thought I was part of a conspiracy.

Was Margaret losing it? It seems so. But these end-time prophecy books and articles did not help.

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

I once visited with some people who owned a farm near the coast in Oregon. Their pastor—and many of the people in the church they attended—had heard that William Branham said California would *soon* slide into the ocean. Even though they were in Oregon, it was believed the California disaster would adversely affect them also.

In order to escape the coming disaster, their pastor said they would need to flee to Colorado. Because a mountain range there was named *Sangre de Cristo Mountains* (meaning “Blood of Christ” in Spanish), there—it was believed—they would be protected by the blood of Christ. It was also taught that anyone in the church who did not make the move, would *no longer* be in the “Bride of Christ”!

But the people with whom I visited did not make the move. The woman’s mother, who was elderly, lived in a little house on their property. For all of them to leave their farm and make the move would be very difficult. The passing of time, of course, proved they made the right decision.



An earthquake fault—like the San Andreas fault—is a fracture in the Earth’s crust where blocks of rock slowly move past each other. These movements can cause earthquakes. Based on scientific research, because the San Andreas Fault and the North American Plate are slowly sliding in opposite directions, Los Angeles and San Francisco will one day be adjacent to one another. But that would take a vast amount of time, the movement being approximately 46 millimeters per year (*the rate fingernails grow!*).

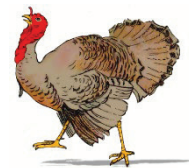
California is firmly planted on the top of the earth’s crust. It *will* experience earthquakes, but it is not hanging like a shelf over the Pacific Ocean, ready to drop off.

In Matthew 24, Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, that “one stone shall not be left upon another.” the disciples asked, “**When** shall these things be?”

Jesus told them there would be deceivers, wars, pestilences, and earthquakes. But these were **not** signs of the end. “See that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, **but the end is NOT yet**” (verse 6). Ironically, the very things that Jesus said were **not** signs of the end—like earthquakes—are sometimes today preached as signs that Jesus is coming soon or the Rapture is about to take place—totally out of context!

Recalling (just now) meetings I held in Turlock, California years ago, the name **Enoch Christoffersen** (1903-1990) comes to mind. In 1923, with \$400, he started a turkey ranch in Turlock which became one of the largest in the world. He served as Mayor for 22 years. Being a dedicated Christian, he gave God the glory for all his successes. In the later part of his life, he was extensively involved in missionary work. The rest areas on the 99 Freeway at Turlock—both northbound and southbound—are named in his honor.

On the light side: Because of his long involvement with turkeys, he developed an authentic imitation of a turkey gobbling. There were times when radio stations would call him at his home on Thanksgiving to have him gobble live on the air.



I never knew him personally, but around 1973 I heard him preach at a large Christian gathering in Phoenix, during which he included (as the audience expected and desired) his turkey gobble!

Getting back to Turlock: Peggy, a fine middle-age Christian woman, attended meetings I held there years ago. Her sincerity and love for God are not in doubt. I relate the following story, as she told it to me. It illustrates how good people can sometimes be deceived and taken in by false end-time teachings.

A preacher who held meetings in (nearby) Modesto, California, said God’s judgment was going to *soon* fall on California, that God was calling his true followers to flee from the state. Because of this, the preacher had developed a Christian commune back in one of the New England states. It sounded like a wonderful place to live and great blessings were promised to those who would heed the warning. Peggy decided to make the move, taking her two nearly-grown daughters along, even though her “skeptical” husband refused to go.

A few weeks later, an old bus belonging to the commune, was sent to pick up the people in California who had decided to make the move. Some followed the bus in their own cars as they ventured eastward across America to what they believed would be their City of Refuge.



About half way, when the bus developed a mechanical problem, they stopped by a park with lawn and trees. There Peggy saw squirrels scampering about. It brought to mind a dream she had some time before with a very similar scene. It *seemed* to confirm that she was following God’s directive!

Meanwhile two of the men who had been following the bus in a car, headed back into town to get help. On the way, they were in a head-on wreck; both were killed. Things went from bad to worse. After arriving at what had been described as “Paradise on Earth,” disappointment after disappointment followed. Within a few months, most of the people—having been deceived and hoodwinked out of their money—left.

When Peggy and her daughters returned to California, her husband had moved in with another woman, never to return to her. Much hurt followed.

The warning of Jesus comes to mind: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves....By their fruits you shall know them” (Matt. 7:15,20).

Gail, a lady I knew quite well years ago, was very active in Christian work. She did not marry until she was about 50. The man she married, while certainly a believer in Jesus, got taken in by “end-time” teachings. Though he was not a Mormon, he purchased property in a remote part of Utah to which they moved. He believed this would provide a place of survival.

In checking the definition of a “survivalist” online, one example is this: “a *paranoid* person bracing for Armageddon.”

Living in this remote area was difficult and unpleasant. When Gail became afflicted with severe and painful hemorrhoids, her husband, holding an extreme view of divine healing, would not permit her to go to a doctor. I am not sure what happened later on; probably both have passed from this life now. Another doomsday disaster.

I could give numerous examples of people I have known who left civilization for remote areas, sometimes with great loss—not only financially, but spiritually. Certainly one should take normal precautions, to be prepared for an emergency of whatever kind it may be. But there is no need to get carried away with extreme and foolish actions that discredit the real meaning of the gospel in the eyes of friends, relatives, and neighbors.

Let me tell you about Bill and Ruth, a married couple I met as a young preacher. They had heard my radio program and invited me for a meal at their lovely home in Westminster, California. We ate, talked, and prayed. We laughed when they played a 45-rpm record by Homer and Jethro, “*That’s Good, That’s Bad.*” It was an evening to be long remembered

When Ruth was younger, she directed a *female* “western swing” band, similar to Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. Like Bob, she would inject the “Ah-haa” while her vocalist sang. When doing a gig in Alaska, she met Bill. They fell in love, married, and settled in southern California. Eventually they both experienced life-changing conversions to Christ.

Bill had been a chain smoker, an addiction that immediately left him when he received Christ. But this presented a problem. Among other business ventures, they owned a string of cigarette vending machines. Eventually he was able to dispose of these, but in the meantime, between each pack of cigarettes he inserted a gospel tract!

Imagine the surprise some customers must have had when not only a pack of cigarettes dropped out of the machine, but a *gospel tract* also!

Reaching out to women in their neighborhood, Ruth opened their home for Bible studies and prayer.

At one point they opened a Christian book and gift store. Trying to make money was not their goal, but rather this served as a place to share the Lord with others.

I knew the pastor of the fairly large church they attended (and in which I had the opportunity to speak on occasion). He told me that in *one year* Bill and Ruth had brought **30** new people into his church.

These were not just visitors, but people who actually became part of his church congregation!

Bill and Ruth were fruitful and victorious believers.

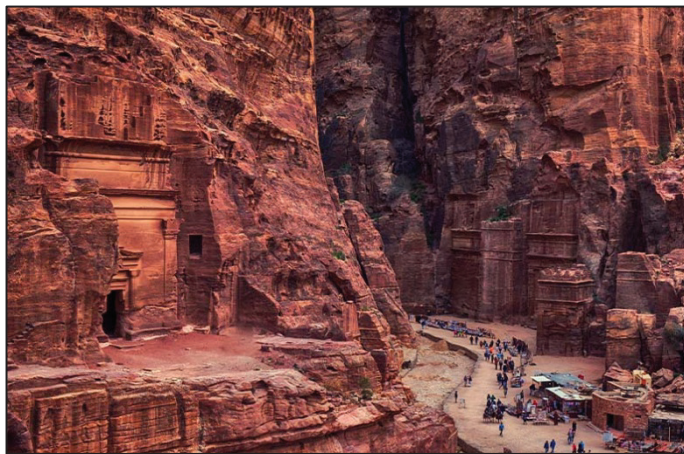
But then, they got into hurtful “end-time” teachings. Things went downhill from there. President Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas. Lyndon Johnson was president, and about to run for a second term. They were “**FOR GOD AND GOLDWATER,**” believing that if Barry Goldwater lost the election to Johnson in 1964, America would be plunged into “The Great Tribulation”!

They no longer trusted the banks. They wanted their money in coins, not paper. They sold their home, believing doomsday was on the horizon.

Moving away from a populated area where they had been so effective, they bought property in the remote hills between Tehachapi and Lake Isabela. They had a mobile home moved onto the property, but soon problems mounted—like difficulty drilling for water. False teachings had taken them on a hurtful detour. What had been a fruitful Christian testimony had now been voided by doomsday delusions.

A few years ago, a man who is now a Christian leader, told me a childhood memory. His age was such that he would soon be starting elementary school in Illinois. He overheard some people talking with his parents who said he might not be able to start to school. It was scary! He wondered if there was something wrong with him—that maybe he would not live long enough!

But that was not the reason. Like some of the other followers of Herbert W. Armstrong, they believed the end-times were shaping up so quickly, they might *soon* need to flee to **Petra** as a place of safety. Airplanes, it was believed, would provide transportation “like the wings of a great eagle” to “fly into the wilderness” (Rev. 12:14).



Petra is an ancient city and archaeological site in southern Jordan, famous for its architecture carved into the rose-colored sandstone. It is surrounded by cliffs and access into the area is through a narrow passage. A location like this, in primitive times, could have provided protection. *But not anymore!*

When I visited Petra in 1978, the thought occurred to me: With modern weapons of mass destruction, *one bomb could devastate the entire area!*

What may have been a place of safety centuries ago, could not be that today.

While writing this article, I recalled (and located) this photo from years ago of me riding a horse into the Petra ruins.



A church in Washington (state) where I spoke numerous times, had a *former* pastor who believed Israel would be “the land of safety” in the end-times. For survival, they would all need to move there. He taught the Lord would show him a sign when it was time for the move. But instead of receiving a “sign,” some years passed, and he died.

Meanwhile people’s lives were unsettled. Young married couples rented instead of buying a house. People could not make any long-range plans, believing their lives would be uprooted because of moving to Israel—maybe *soon!*

Eventually a new pastor took the church, one who did not have this emphasis. The “moving to Israel” teaching was set aside, things got back to normal, and peace was restored to that congregation.

Instead of Israel being a land of **safety**, ever since its founding in 1948, that whole region has been marked by ongoing conflict, violence, and insecurity. When I visited there with a group of pastors (of varied denominations) in 1983, the young Jewish man who was our guide told us he had already fought in **three** wars.

When people make claims about the future, there is often no way to prove what they say will *not* happen. However, in time—over and over—the falseness becomes apparent. Fortunately, most who believe in Jesus, are not taken in with doomsday delusions. They are content to live a victorious Christian life and leave the times and seasons to HIM! (Acts 1:7; cf. Mark 13:32).

Peter warned: “There shall be *false* teachers among you who...will make merchandise of you” (2 Peter 2:1-3). And John wrote: “Try the spirits whether they are of God; because many *false* prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

If there is a “false,” this implies there is a “true.” I am not in the camp of those who say God **never** reveals anything, **never** heals anyone, **never** grants spiritual gifts any more. But what I am saying is this: The Christian world has been plagued with all kinds of false prophecies, speculation, rumors, and misapplied Scriptures. The Bible says we are not to despise prophecies, but it goes on to say we must “**PROVE ALL THINGS**” and hold fast that which is “good” (1 Thess. 5:20, 21).

Based on the observations I have made over the years, let me give a warning: Don’t get carried away with prophecy teachers who constantly suggest or set dates, that say everything is shaping up, it is countdown time to Armageddon, this is the last generation, America’s demise is at hand, our money system will soon fail, or that they have God’s final warning. They repeatedly give false or partial information to make their points. Often Bible prophecies that have already been fulfilled are forced into a brief, soon-to-happen doomsday.

—RW

Prior to the coming of the year **2,000**, with all the Y2K frenzy, I wrote a book called **RECKLESS RUMORS**. For the cover, I put together a composite of books and booklets shown here:

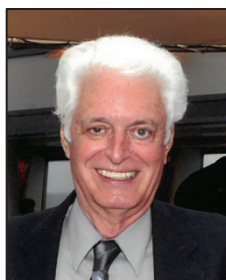


A quarter of a century has now passed. All of these end-time teachings which, at the time, seemed valid to many, have now proven to be false.

Readers may request a **FREE** copy of my 128-page book **RECKLESS RUMORS**, as a gift from this ministry. Or, for those who prefer to pay, an offering of **\$10** can be sent for the book, including postage.

For those who correspond by email, I can send a list of **hundreds** of dates, now *past*, that—contrary to Scripture—were set for the rapture, the coming of Christ, the end of the world, etc.

“The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make his face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you...
and give you peace”
—Numbers 6:24-26.



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