

2012: THE END GAME BEGINS

By Marie D. Jones

The world is abuzz with talk of the year 2012; however, not everyone is looking forward to the year with the same outlook or expectations. For some, the year hints at apocalyptic end times, a period in which the world will be thrown into utter chaos and violent upheaval. A turbulent and tumultuous epoch in which both natural and man-made disasters will decimate and possibly lead to the extinction of life as we know it. Other, more optimistic people perceive this date as a moment of awakening, a massive global transformation of consciousness...one which is to be anticipated with joy and celebration.

Perhaps, the real outcome lies somewhere between the two extremes.

The mythology behind the 2012 enigma focuses on the ancient Mayan Long Count Calendar which was a Mesoamerican calendar system that mysteriously ends on December 21, 2012. Interestingly enough, that date also coincides with the winter solstice. This date further corresponds with a predicted “galactic alignment” which is believed to occur when our solar system passes directly through the center of the Milky Way galaxy. Although there is some valid argument for other “end dates” as prescribed by the intricate and sophisticated Mayan calendar, including the alternate end date of October 28, 2011 (as well as an end date of December 23, 2012, rather than December 21), most experts who have studied the Long Count agree that time is coming to an end.

But what kind of an end? In the human mind, the etymology of the word “end” conjures a certain finality – one in which there is no hope.

Thousands of years before our current civilization, did this seemingly simple agrarian society actually predict that life would end altogether, snuffed out in an explosive supernova of disaster upon plague, warfare upon extermination?

Both the Judeo-Christian and Islamic end time scenarios, which are based upon Western fundamentalist Abrahamic thought, do indeed herald a time of literal cleansing. A time when the earth will suffer through the coming of the Four Horsemen bearing gifts of war, famine, plague and death - with the ultimate judgment day not too far behind. Certainly, there is ample evidence in other religious traditions of an ending of one age, as in the Hindu “yugas” or ages that mark a cyclical pattern of both external and internal creation and destruction. This ongoing cycle or “kalpa” also has an end date when, according to Hindu belief, the final avatar will incarnate as Kali and bring about the destruction of all wicked people. Is that likewise an “end?”

Even the oldest creation stories and mythologies tell of a cosmic cycle punctuated by a Big Ending, so to speak, although many native traditions believe that the end, though violent and deadly to be sure, would then be the beginning of a new era of peace, harmony and enlightenment.

The Mayans themselves have suggested that their own end date is really nothing more than the finishing point of a particular age or “underworld,” the one we are living in right now, the Galactic Underworld, and the entry point into the Universal Underworld of both conscious evolution and revolution. There is nothing in Mayan tradition, lore or belief that envisages a scenario in which we will all die and the planet will cease to exist. Rather, the idea is one of amazing and collective rebirth. A period of newfound cosmic awareness, an era in which humanity expands their collective conscious awareness.

Then why all the angst and fear when people speak of 2012? Maybe, the answer is within us. Perhaps it is as simple as basic human psychology. Nobody likes change, especially when it is preceded by great stress, trials, tribulations, and challenges, the likes of which we are already seeing in the years leading up to 2012.

Even if we were to ignore completely the Mayan Long Count Calendar and its Aztec sister version (which speaks of the very same end time transformation) and even if we did not ascribe to the religious traditions that await total human annihilation at the hands of a final battle between the devil and the Christ (don't worry, the good guys will be raptured, we are told!), there is still ample evidence that the next few years will be rife with chaos, disorder and destruction. Why? Because what we resist persists and often grows, and if there is indeed a wave of spiritual transformation gaining momentum, then coming resistance will be more than enough to make us wonder if we will, indeed, wake up to a brave new world on the first morning of 2013.

As we have seen over the last several years, global power is shifting to the East, with economic turmoil already gripping much of the West in a headlock of plunging home values, rising energy costs, shaky markets, and a widening gap between the rich and the poor. As we approach (if we have not already) peak oil, the quest for easily extracted fuel will exponentially increase--even as the population skyrockets in urbanized areas as well as in nations such as China and India which will only serve to further demand while supplies continue dwindling to depletion. Access to potable water threatens to plunge the entire globe into new wars, even as corporations scramble to privatize what little natural resources remain.

Global climate change is destroying indigenous and island lifestyles, and creating chaos all over the world as more nations are forced to deal with brutal drought, while others battle unprecedented flooding. Warm places are getting warmer, Arctic Ice is melting, and the unfortunate people of Tuvalu are watching as their entire island sinks mercilessly into rising ocean waters.

Malaria, a humid-weather disease, is moving into highlands where it never existed before while other diseases threaten to derail any attempts by our most cutting edge pharmaceuticals to fight them. West Nile Virus, SARS, MRSA and avian flu all seem poised to pounce upon nations of people unprepared for pandemics, let alone regional epidemics. And lest you think our public health and emergency preparedness systems

will save us, let me remind you of the horrendous failings apparent during Hurricane Katrina.

But don't despair! The news is not all awful. Science, medicine and technology promise to explode into the stratosphere in the coming years. Computer technology historically follows an established pattern known as "Moore's Law" which describes an important trend in the history of computer hardware whereby the number of transistors that can be inexpensively placed on an integrated circuits increase exponentially, doubling approximately every two years. Some technologists believe that this increase is steadfastly moving towards a "singularity," when growth, development and transformation will come together in a climactic head, ushering in a brave new world of artificial intelligence. Before we know it, life itself will seem to be a sci-fi movie!

Quantum computers, bioengineering, human longevity experiments, and nanotechnology stand at the forefront of major advances in the way we live, and even die. With astonishing new genetic research, we may one day see the end of all disease. With the promising new exploration of bionics, we may never need worry about heart or liver failure again, knowing that we can order a new one that combines the best of both computer technology and biology - creating new types of living systems that promise to change not only our quality of life...but our whole culture itself.

Naturally, some may fear the rise of artificial intelligence and the coming singularity due to the (perhaps warranted) concern that humans will be somehow made obsolete – or worse, that we may lose control to the very machinery that we created...machinery that can think faster and more efficiently than we do. Others still wait excitedly for the development of technologies which will make life easier than ever. However, even the promise of an easier life comes with a price. Rising rates of heart disease, cancer and obesity are directly linked with the increasingly sedentary lifestyles of most developed nations. Add to that existing rates of disease in undeveloped nations, and emerging diseases entering and re-entering the fray, and humanity may not be wiped out at all by a big, bold natural disaster or nuclear war.

Alarmingly enough, we may get snuffed out by the tiniest of threats, those packing the biggest punch of all – viruses that invade our bodies. Viruses pose a very real, very significant threat to humankind as our bodies are too weak and stressed to fight back, with pharmaceuticals rendered ineffective from years of overuse.

Surprisingly, the greatest challenges that face humanity and the earth in general, over the next few years are all preventable. With that being said, the biggest mystery is why we are not doing more to prevent them now...while we still can...and when it truly counts. Global climate change is creating a need for new ways of co-existing with the earth. Already, water shortages are threatening to derail peace agreements and further escalate already tense relations between nations into the stratosphere of war. Even the decreasing rates of food production, coupled with over inflated prices and a global market that favors the rich, hint at another coming disaster; the spread of famine into regions never having experienced lack of food before.

So what can we do as individuals, communities, and nations? How does one prepare for 2012? If the world is going to end for good, then obviously no preparation is needed. However, if the Mayans and others were right, and the ending is really more of a beginning, can we indeed prepare at all?

The green movement, focusing on building sustainability now, is a great place to start. We should be doing anything possible to make the coming changes less disruptive and damaging, whether that means conserving, recycling or raising awareness of the carbon “footprints” we each leave...and how we can lessen those footprints. Local communities are already springing up around the concept of contained, sustainable living, with residents pitching in by growing food, sharing water resources, bartering services and even watching out for each other’s children to create a new sense of connectedness and unity. Should this effort spread, we may be able to greatly diminish the potential for death, disaster and disease that our overpopulated, stressed out and soon-to-be tapped out planet is quickly plummeting towards.

Ultimately, the year 2012 may be more about internal transformation rather than external change. Even with increasing numbers of super storms and earthquakes, an asteroid or two coming too close for comfort, the highest sunspot cycle activity in years, global shifts in political and economic power, and a host of other earthbound changes, we may need to concentrate on the internal work to be done first. Spiritual transformation is on the lips of many awaiting 2012. Perhaps by altering our collective consciousness we can change not only our own lives, but our destiny as a people. Wouldn’t it be great to wake up on the first morning of 2013 to a better world than we ever imagined?

The problem is that before we can realize it...we must first have both the insight and the foresight to imagine it.

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