

DANGER DECEPTIONS AND YOUR DESTINY

A CLEAR-EYED LOOK AT EARTH'S UNFOLDING STORMS

A Signs of the Times® Publication



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Chapter 1

Eighty-Nine Seconds to Midnight

Clifford Goldstein

By now it's almost old hat: one religious group or another proclaiming not only the imminent demise of the world (or the catastrophic events leading to it) but the exact date as well: January 1, 2000; April 6, 2000; April 29, 2007; October 21, 2011; and December 21, 2012. And these doomsday dates were just those predicted since the turn of the millennium.

In every case so far the predicted demise has, obviously, not come. No doubt, if the past is a precursor to the future, more people—interpreting everything from the book of Ezekiel in the Old Testament to the Gospel of Mark in the New Testament, to the Koran, or even to Nostradamus—will be giving us future dates to mark doomsday.

Of course, it's one thing when some religious enthusiasts do this. They've been making these kinds of failed predictions for centuries.

But when atomic scientists, if not giving us a

precise date, nevertheless warn that our world is, to use the metaphor of a clock, just eighty-nine seconds away from midnight, then maybe it's time to sit up and take notice.

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

From the moment the United States successfully tested its first atomic explosion in 1945, some scientists involved in the project became fearful about what they had unleashed. After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that same year, they began a magazine called the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists of Chicago* (later changed to *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*). Its primary concern is to inform the public about nuclear policy and nuclear arms control. It has been published continuously since 1945, though in recent years its area of concern has spread to other potential threats, including environmental issues, weapons of mass destruction, emerging technologies, and disease.

Since 1947, the journal has used the image of the Doomsday Clock, with midnight being doomsday itself. And of course, the closer the minute hand gets to midnight, the closer we are to the destruction of the world.

Since the start, the minute hand has fluctuated. In 1947, the time was 11:53—seven minutes to doomsday. In 1949, after the Soviets tested their first atomic weapon, the minute hand jumped to 11:57. If that weren't bad enough, in 1953, it jumped to

11:58—the closest to doomsday it's ever been—when both the United States and the Soviet Union tested thermonuclear devices within just nine months of each other. The farthest back it went was 11:47, when the United States and the Soviet Union (which was dissolving) signed a nuclear arms reduction treaty in 1991.

However, recently the minute hand has started slowly moving back toward midnight, and this year it reached 11:58 and 31 seconds—just eighty-nine seconds to midnight! The *Bulletin* expressed the concern like this: "In setting the Clock one second closer to midnight, the Science and Security Board sends a stark signal: Because the world is already perilously close to the precipice, a move of even a single second should be taken as an indication of extreme danger and an unmistakable warning that every second of delay in reversing course increases the probability of global disaster."*

After all, when 16,300 nuclear weapons exist, and many of these are able to be launched in about fifteen minutes, it's no wonder these scientists are fearful. And with North Korea having nuclear weapons and rumors of it also getting a submarine capable of launching those weapons, one might think that eighty-nine seconds to midnight is a bit optimistic!

Guided missiles, misguided men

Of course, even if many eminent scientists are involved in the Doomsday Clock project, it's still

subjective. Nevertheless, that these scientists are so concerned does help us to understand how precarious our situation is. Despite the great hopes of many in the 1800s that science, technology, and progress were leading the world, if not to outright utopia, then at least to unheralded times of peace and prosperity, that is not what has happened. World War I, World War II, and other wars between then and now have shown that, though human technology and science have advanced, human morals haven't kept up.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said so eloquently: "Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men."

About forty years earlier, Albert Einstein warned that "our entire much-praised technological progress, and civilization generally, could be compared to an axe in the hand of a pathological criminal."

An axe in the hand of a pathological criminal? How about a suitcase nuke in the hands of ISIS, instead?

Jesus' warning

Though it's nice to be optimistic and we are called to be "peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9), almost two thousand years ago Jesus warned that, prior to His return, the world was going to be anything but a utopia. To the contrary, He warned, for instance, that "you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will

be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:6, 7). And as if that weren't bad enough, He added that "all these are the beginning of sorrows" (verse 8).

Just the beginning of sorrows? Maybe He was talking about floods, terrorism, and tsunamis as well, not to mention the growing disparity in wealth between the world's richest people and everyone else—a situation that can only lead to more global instability.

The point is that we are only 25 percent into the twenty-first century, and the future looks scary.

The promise of the return

There can be no question that, as Jesus predicted, things are not great here. Instead they are bad, and in some ways seem to be getting even worse! But amid all the wars, rumors of war, ecological crises, earthquakes, and terror attacks—we can draw one important bit of solace. In the context of all the sorrows of the end, Jesus said, "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28).

Lift up your heads! Yes, because this promised redemption has its basis in the first coming of Jesus, when He died on the cross for the sins of the world. "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). And in the first coming of Jesus we have the hope and surety of the second, when all that He accomplished for us at the time of

His first coming will reach a climax. And when that day comes—whenever it comes—those waiting for Jesus will look up in the sky, and they "will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26).

The Doomsday Clock by all means has an important message: our world will not last forever. Sooner or later, the minute hand will reach midnight, and then the end *will come*.

But the end won't happen because of nuclear war or climate change. Instead, it will happen when Jesus comes back, which means not just the end of this world with all its woes, evil, and suffering but the beginning of a new world, where we are promised that "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

The clock is ticking. And with every tick, we get one second closer to the promise of Christ's return and the end—which is, really, all we need to know about its timing.

^{* &}quot;It Is Now 89 Seconds to Midnight," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, accessed June 23, 2025, https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/#nav_menu.