

# A Brief History of Failed Prophecies <sup>1</sup>

**2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE:** Prophets and Prophetesses of the **Montanist movement** predicted Jesus would return during their lifetime and establish the New Jerusalem in the city of Pepuza in Asia Minor.

**375 to 400 CE:** **Martin of Tours** was convinced that the end would happen sometime before 400 CE.

**1000:** **Many Christians** in Europe predicted the end of the world on Jan 1, 1000. As the date approached, Christian armies waged war against Pagan countries in Northern Europe to convert them to Christianity, by force if necessary, before Christ returned in the year 1000.

**1284:** **Pope Innocent III** computed this date by adding 666 years to the date Islam was founded.

**1533:** **Melchior Hoffman** predicted that Jesus' return would happen in 1533 and that the New Jerusalem would be established in Strasbourg, Germany. He was arrested and died in jail.

**1792:** The date calculated as the end of the world by some believers in the **Shaker movement**.

**1843:** **William Miller**, founder of the Millerite movement, predicted that Jesus would come on March 21, 1843. When Jesus did not return, Miller predicted a new date of Oct 22, 1844. Many Christians sold their property and possessions, quit their jobs, and prepared for the second coming. Nothing happened. This became known as "The Great Disappointment."

**1914:** **Watchtower Society** (Jehovah's Witnesses) believed that 1914 would be the start of Armageddon. Here's how they got the date. Daniel 4 refers to the end as *seven times* or eras of time. Each era equals 360 days, giving a total of 2520 days, representing 2520 years. When they added 2520 years to 607 BCE (fall of Jerusalem), 1914 became the date. When 1914 passed, they predicted other dates including 1918, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975, and 1994.

**1936:** **Herbert W Armstrong** (*Worldwide Church of God*) predicted that the *Day of the Lord* would happen sometime in 1936.

**1959:** Victor Houteff, founder of the **Davidians**, believed he and his followers would be killed, resurrected, and taken up in the Rapture. After Houteff died, his widow set the date of April 22, 1959. On that date, hundreds of Davidians gathered at Mount Carmel near Waco, TX, but the prophecy failed.

**1967:** During the Six-Day war, the Israeli army captured all of Jerusalem and, for many **Conservative Christians**, this signaled that Armageddon was near and the rapture of the church would occur quickly.

**1973:** **Moses David** (formerly David Berg), founder of The Children of God (a.k.a. "The Family"), predicted in the *Endtime News!* that a comet would hit the earth in 1973 and destroy all life in the United States.

**1981:** **Chuck Smith**, Pastor of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, CA, predicted the Rapture would occur 1981 in his book, *Future Survival*. He arrived at 1981 by adding 40 years (a biblical generation) to 1948 (the year Israel became a state) and subtracting 7 years for the Tribulation.

**1982:** Astronomers **John Gribben & Stephen Plagemann** predicted the *Jupiter Effect* in 1974. They wrote that when various planets were aligned on the same side of the sun, tidal forces would create solar flares, radio interruptions, rainfall and temperature disturbances and massive earthquakes.

**1982:** In 1982, **Pat Robinson** predicted in a May, 1980 broadcast of the 700 Club: "I guarantee you by the end of 1982 there is going to be a judgment on the world."

**1988:** **Hal Lindsey** in his book, *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, predicted the Rapture was coming in 1988—one generation or 40 years after the creation of the state of Israel. This failed prophecy did not appear to damage his reputation.

**1988:** **Colin Deal** wrote a book entitled *Christ Returns by 1988: 101 Reasons Why*. **Edgar Whisenant** published a book, *88 Reasons Why The Rapture Will Be in 1988*. When his prediction failed, he published another book, *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989*.

**1992:** **Lee Jang Rim**, a Korean pastor and leader of the Mission for the Coming Days, taught that the Rapture would occur on Oct 28, 1992 at 10:00 a.m. EST. Thousands of his followers sold all their possessions and waited on top of Prayer Mountain. The Rapture did not occur and many of his followers allegedly committed suicide. Later, Lee was convicted of fraud.

**1995:** **David Koresh** was leader of the *Students of the Seven Seals* (a.k.a. Branch Davidians) group in Waco, Texas. He changed the name of their commune from *Mt. Carmel* to *Ranch Apocalypse*, because he believed the final battle of Armageddon mentioned in the Revelation would start at the Branch Davidian compound. On April 10, 1993, after a 51-day standoff, 76 members died as a result of a fire thought to be set by Davidians themselves.

**1997:** **Heaven's Gate** suicides occurred between March 24 and March 26, during a time frame when the cultists had predicted a UFO trailing behind Comet Hale-Bopp would pick up their souls and save them from the imminent Apocalypse. **Kenneth Hagin** predicted the Rapture would occur in 1997, beginning in St. Louis.

**1998:** **Tom Stewart** predicted the end of the world in his book, *1998: Year of the Apocalypse*.

**1999:** On September 25, 1997, **Hal Lindsey** predicted on his TV show *International Intelligence Briefing* that Russia would invade Israel within 18 months (May 25, 1999), which would lead to Armageddon. **Jack Van Impe** predicted the Rapture and the Second Coming for October 1999.

**2000:** Many predicted the end of the world, the second coming, or the rapture on this date, including: **Hal Lindsey**, *Planet Earth—2000*; **Rev. Sun Myung Moon**; **Edgar Cayce**; **Ed Dobson**, *The End: Why Jesus Could Return by A.D. 2000*; **Lester Sumrall**, *I Predict 2000*; **Jerry Falwell** announced: God "may be preparing to confound our language, to jam our communications, scatter our efforts, and judge us for our sin and rebellion against his lordship. We are hearing from many sources that January 1, 2000, will be a fateful day in the history of the world." Happy New Year! (*Christianity Today*, Jan. 11, 1999)

**2023:** **Ian Gurney** predicts in his book *The Cassandra Prophecy - Armageddon Approaches* that the "final date ... the end of mankind's time on this planet, is less than twenty two years away" from 2001, which means 2023 at the latest. His prediction is based on his reading of Revelation.

**4,500,000,000:** Scientists predict the sun will swell into a red giant star, swallowing Mercury, Venus, Earth, and perhaps Mars. That will be the end.

<sup>1</sup> Sources: Religious Tolerance.org ([www.religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org)). Richard Kyle, *The last days are here again: A history of the end times* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998). Chris Nelson, "A brief history of the apocalypse," at: <http://www.abhota.info/index.htm>. This site contains over 200 references to end-of-the-world predictions that have not happened.