

The Morning Word Digital
Library

Asteroid Impact

Scientific Lunacy or Bible Prophecy

Charles Loeffke

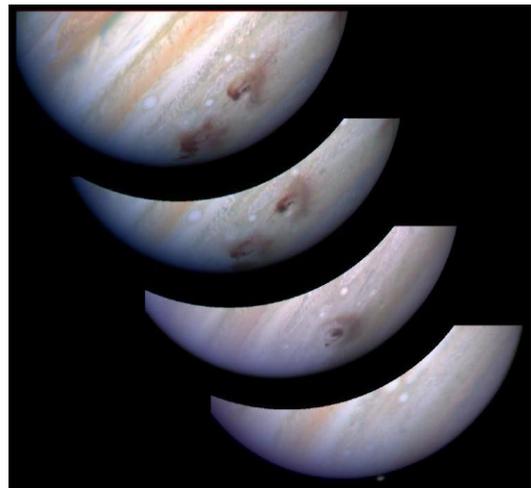
Asteroid Impact Scientific Lunacy or Bible Prophecy?

Scientific Lunacy

In the late 1980's, there was very little acceptance among geologists and geoscientists that giant asteroids, the size of mountains, had impacted our planet. Today, a mere ten years later, there is almost universal agreement among scientists that Earth has experienced several enormous impacts. Funny, isn't it, how science has radically changed its course of thought in such a short time! The notion that Earth has been pummeled by giant asteroids was regarded as scientific lunacy in 1978 when geoscientist Dr. Luis Alvarez, (University of California at Berkeley) first advanced the idea that the dinosaurs became extinct because of an asteroid impact. Today, however, the evidence of asteroid impacts on Earth is indisputable. More than 150 impact sites have been identified and studied. One of the largest impact craters (about 175 miles across) is located in the Gulf of Mexico. In fact, many scientists now believe the dinosaurs became extinct worldwide because of the Mexico impact.

Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9

If anyone still doubts the possibility that giant asteroids can and do impact planets, then a quick review of the July 16-22, 1994 comet impact of "Shoemaker-Levy 9" should remove any doubt. This comet plunged into Jupiter with detonating forces that far exceeds all the combined nuclear warheads on Earth. Even though the comet fragmented into 21 pieces before smashing into Jupiter, it took only one piece to blast a crater in the



planet large enough to place two planets the size of Earth side-by-side! If the impact on Jupiter is not evidence enough, examine the full moon with a pair of binoculars or an inexpensive telescope and you can clearly see hundreds of craters caused by asteroid impacts. The pockmarked surface of the moon proves there is a lot of debris floating around in space. In fact, scientists have recently documented more than 200 NEO's (near-Earth objects) that regularly intersect Earth's orbit around the sun each year! All this information proves a simple fact: Earth travels in a cosmic shooting gallery.

Impact Forces

Here is a simple law of physics: When one object collides with another object, energy is released. The amount of energy released in a collision is directly related to the size, speed, density and direction of the objects. In the case of cosmic collisions (such as an asteroid impacting Earth), an additional factor is added to the equation because of the atmosphere. When an asteroid plunges toward Earth at speeds of 30,000 to 75,000 miles-per-hour, the front of the asteroid experiences a dramatically increasing level of atmospheric pressure – much like the pressure a person would feel holding an arm out of a car window while accelerating from 30 to 100 miles-per-hour. As the asteroid comes closer to Earth, the atmosphere becomes more dense and the pressure against the asteroid increases significantly. When the asteroid hurls through Earth's atmosphere at high speed, it produces friction which superheats the molecules in the asteroid. The heat causes the electrical forces bonding the molecules together to shear. As a result, the asteroid explodes with a force that is a million-fold greater than that of man-made atomic bombs. If the composition of the asteroid is not very dense, the asteroid can explode in mid-air.

In fact, this is apparently what happened on June 30, 1908 in Siberia. An asteroid having an estimated diameter of 200 feet exploded above the tundra and leveled every tree in a 50-mile radius! The destruction radiated out from the mid-air explosion like bicycle spokes for more than 800 square miles. Since this happened before the age of telecommunication in a remote part of the world, very few people were aware of the impact for several years. However, one survivor told how he was instantly *transported* about a mile from where he was standing one morning by the wind of a great boom! He claimed the wind blew his clothes off, destroyed his house and blew his family and all his goats away. About 20 years after the explosion, Russian researchers finally went to Tunguska to examine the evidence. Yes, a very large area of trees were lying on the ground in a radial fashion (trees pointing away from the explosion), but there was no impact crater and the matter was dismissed as a mysterious explosion of "swamp gas" – until the 1980's.

Oceanic Impact

As the awareness of an asteroid threat grows, scientists have dedicated more time to this area of study. In April 1997, at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico, scientists created a 3-D computer model of a comet impacting the Atlantic Ocean. For this computer simulation, they chose a ½ mile-wide comet that would impact the Atlantic Ocean at a 45 degree angle. (In cosmic terms, a ½ mile-wide comet is very small.) Using reference data tables and a new supercomputer from Intel, they calculated the impact would release the energy of 15 million Hiroshima-strength bombs. The study revealed very startling information. For instance, the blast could vaporize up to 1 trillion tons of water, which would form ice-crystals that would seriously damage the ozone layer and affect weather patterns for many months to come. Computer data also suggests that the resulting tidal wave would be about 300 feet high – in which case, Florida and much of the East coast of the United States, along with the coastal regions of Europe would be washed away.

Publicity

The threat of an asteroid impact has attracted considerable media attention including the recent movies "Deep Impact" and Armageddon." In February 1997, NBC aired a dramatic mini-series about an asteroid impact. According to the Nielsen ratings, this mini-series received the highest ratings of any mini-series ever presented on TV. More than 60 million Americans watched the series. During the same month, the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) aired two documentaries featuring prominent scientists around the world validating the inevitability that Earth will be impacted again. The words, "It's not a matter of if, but a matter of when..." were repeated several times. The conclusion of the late pioneer Dr. Eugene Shoemaker of the U.S. Geological Survey, and many others, is that Earth will be impacted again. Their claims are based on the law of nature that random events take place in predictable intervals of time. Scientists reason that civilization threatening impacts happen every 100,000 years or so, and they conclude that we are near the interval or point in time when such an impact is due to happen again.

Hale-Bopp

The March/April 1997 nightly appearance of the Hale-Bopp comet also raised visual awareness that there are objects traveling through space that come close to Earth. Even though the comet posed no threat to Earth, there were some sensationalists who speculated that Hale-Bopp could change course and impact Earth. Then, there was talk about a UFO hiding behind

the comet, "a companion object" that contained extraterrestrials who were coming to visit Earth.

Unfortunately, the 39 members of the cult group called "Heaven's Gate" took the misleading information seriously and committed suicide so they could join the UFO that was allegedly "hiding" behind Hale-Bopp. No doubt, insanity continues to plague the human race. But, the threat of an asteroid impact is not lunacy or dementia – according to the best that science has to offer - it is a matter of timing.

Helpless or Helpful?

From the point of survival, the threat of an asteroid impact is one of those things that man is almost powerless to do anything about. If an asteroid is headed for Earth, who can stop it? Some scientists think an asteroid can be stopped and are urging developed nations to join resources and technology to prepare an international defense against this cosmic threat. The latest "rescue" plans include schemes to nudge or push asteroids away from orbits that would impact Earth. But such a plan presumes there will be enough warning time and the availability of the right equipment to push a huge mountain out of the way while it is traveling toward Earth at 40,000+ miles-per-hour. Yet, other scientists are convinced that literally nothing can be done. They argue that to blow an oncoming asteroid apart could make matters much worse, causing fragments to impact Earth in numerous places resulting in a much wider area of devastation. So, scientists still wrestle with what option is the best plan of defense.

One Good Reason

Should we really worry about an asteroid impact? Most people, after considering the issue for a minute, shrug and say, "What will be, will be." After all, what can one person do about a cosmic threat? Actually? Nothing. For this reason, the threat of an asteroid impact is often treated with the same seriousness as a science fiction thriller. But, and this is an emphatic *but*, there is one very good reason to thoughtfully consider the possibility of an impact. The Bible, specifically the book of Revelation, predicts the following: Meteoric showers of burning hail, two asteroid impacts and a period of great darkness. These predicted events are judgments from God and happen a few months before the return of Christ. Even though scientists predict the likelihood of an asteroid impact, they have no clue how human beings will respond to the devastation resulting from the impact. But, God knows what man will do and Bible prophecy reveals how nations and people will respond after the predicted events occur!

After an Impact

What would happen if two great asteroids impacted Earth with the results scientists expect? Since the Bible predicts two impacts, one hitting the sea and the other striking a landmass, briefly consider the dramatic outcome of such events. The ocean impact would set up a sequence of events that would have long-term consequences:

1. First, a series of tidal waves would destroy many coastal cities. The violence of the affected ocean (caused by the displacement of billions of cubic feet of water in less than 30 seconds) would cause adjoining ocean tides to rampage, resulting in coastal regions far beyond the impacted ocean to be flooded and destroyed.
2. The shock waves from the initial impact would sink thousands of ships. Trade between nations would immediately stop. The violence of the ocean would continue to prevent ships from carrying food and merchandise between ports for several weeks.
3. These shock waves would also kill thousands of sea creatures. The death of many sea creatures would fill that portion of the ocean with rotten flesh and red tide. Red tide is an algae, that looks like blood and flourishes in anoxic (oxygen deficient) water.
4. Weather patterns would be violently disrupted. Great hurricanes and thousands of tornados would be spawned by powerful changes in the atmosphere. The jet stream would be moved from its seasonal course and rains from the condensing water vapor would flood certain nations of Earth for weeks, while in other areas, famine would occur in otherwise fruitful places.

If an asteroid impacted a continent, the results would be no less devastating. Notice the events that would be set into motion:

1. An asteroid striking a continent would cause extensive death by contaminating the underground water supplies of large cities. Ground waves from the impact would sheer septic fields allowing deadly bacteria to enter the aquifers. The seismic havoc radiating from the impact site would destroy the geological integrity of toxic waste sites. The leakage of lethal chemicals and radioactive waste into underground streams would contaminate drinking water for thousands of square miles. Many people would die or become violently ill from drinking poisonous water.

2. A great impact would trigger earthquakes and tremors worldwide by releasing huge tectonic stresses.
3. The impact would disrupt the infrastructures of communication, travel and commerce. Even a remote impact zone would have horrific effects upon people living a thousand miles away.
4. If the impact were substantial enough, it is possible that even Earth's orbit about the Sun could be altered – seasons would be hotter or colder than they now are. Further, the gravitational effect of the moon on the tides would be much more pronounced, causing continual flooding.

Obviously, the loss of human life would be pandemic in either scenario. This is why scientists catalog large asteroid impacts to be civilization threatening. Scientists now believe that dinosaurs became extinct because of a great asteroid impact and the creatures that were not immediately destroyed by the impact either died from the resulting havoc or the famine that followed. Even though scientists estimate the dinosaurs disappeared from Earth about 65 million years ago, this writer believes the dinosaurs became extinct about 4 thousand years ago at the time of Noah's flood. This writer also believes Noah's flood was caused by asteroid impacts – sent as judgments from God! In other words, the rain that fell from the heavens for 40 days and nights was condensing water vapor from *several* impacts that occurred in a few hours.

Bible Predictions

Since Martin Luther's separation from the Church of Rome in the 16th century, Bible prophecy has had many powerful expositors. In fact, many prophetic views are expressed daily on radio and TV. Notwithstanding this diversity that confuses so many of us, it might surprise you to learn that one of the first individuals to predict a future, literal fulfillment of Revelation 8:7-12 (where meteoric showers and asteroid impacts are described) was Dr. Josiah Litch, an 19th century Methodist minister from the northeastern United States. Even though he eventually left the Methodist Church, he remained a devout student of the Bible. Years later, in 1873, he published a book titled, *A complete Harmony of Daniel and the Apocalypse.*" (Published by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, Philadelphia)

Consider these texts from Revelation and his insightful comments that follow: "The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up." (Revelation 8:7) Dr. Litch wrote: "The result following the sounding of this trumpet was hail and fire mingled with blood. This was in part – the fire and the hail – one

of the plagues of Egypt, sent as judgments upon a perverse and willful king. That blood should be mingled with it is nothing strange, for bloody showers have fallen at divers times both in this and other lands, authentic accounts of which are still in existence. The effect of this judgment will be the burning up of one third part of the trees and all green grass. It may be objected, perhaps, that such things are exceedingly improbable, and can never literally transpire; but whoever can have faith in the literality of the plagues of Egypt can have no difficulty in believing in the literality of this prediction." (Page 156)

Consider this verse and his comments: "The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed." (Revelation 8:8,9) "That such [the turning of the water to blood] was the result of this meteoric fiery mass the Scriptures plainly assert: let those doubt them who may; we cleave to God's word; what it so unequivocally asserts we believe." (Page 157)

Last, consider this text and his comments: "The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water -- the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter." (Revelation 8:10,11) "The falling of meteors of various sizes is so common an event, and the evidence of the existence of such bodies in space so abundant, that there need be nothing incredible in the fall of one so bitter as to embitter the waters of rivers and fountains so as to poison them and cause the death of those who drink them. The statement is a literal one, "there fell a great star from heaven." [He quotes from the KJV.] (page 158)

Better Data

Nearly 125 years have passed since Dr. Litch penned these words on Revelation 8. Is his interpretation right? More and more Bible students from many denominations think so. Today, the scientific data supports his conclusion for a literal interpretation of Revelation 8. A number of studies have produced results that are amazingly consistent with the Bible. Even though we have photographs from the Hubble Space Telescope showing the impacts on Jupiter and there are numerous craters on Earth lined with iridium – proof positive of previous asteroid impacts – many people still disbelieve the plainest words of Scripture. Back in 1873, Dr. Litch's comments were received by religious leaders much like the comments of Dr. Alvarez were received in 1978 by his colleagues. Nevertheless, the truth stands clear: asteroids have impacted Earth and wrought much destruction. Since 1978 science has dramatically changed its mind. Indeed, there

is evidence of the clearest magnitude confirming that asteroid impacts have happened, and scientists are predicting they are going to occur again.

However, a serious problem still exists! The Bible believing community has not caught on yet. Scientists are broadcasting the very things that preachers should be proclaiming from their pulpits. But, many preachers and teachers have not considered that the prophecies actually concern the majority of people on Earth. In fact, among Christians, there seems to be a serious omission of prophetic study altogether. Shouldn't Bible-believing people be as willing to update their views as scientists have been? Ten years ago, the notion that Earth had experienced asteroid impacts was scientific lunacy. Today, the evidence is overwhelming. Dr. Litch predicted, 125 years ago, the future fulfillment of Revelation 8 – meteoric showers and asteroid impacts as heralds of Christ's Second Coming, but alas, those who should be anticipating the fulfillment of Scripture don't seem to grasp the idea that God has a comprehensive plan for everyone on this planet. What is wrong with this picture? Answer: Religious traditions.

Futurism and Historicism

There are several schools of thought on Bible prophecy and naturally, the two most popular views, futurism and historicism, are diametrically opposed. They are very well defined and enthusiastically defended by scholars on both sides. Futurism has the most followers and its origin can be traced back to the late 1500's. The two most prominent teachings of futurism are variations on the rapture and the restoration of the state of Israel. Even though futurism generates a lot of excitement and discussion, its significance will disappear the day God sends the meteoric showers of burning hail and two asteroid impacts.

Futurism misses the prophetic mark in several areas, but especially in two important ones. First, there is no biblical support for a pre-tribulation or mid-tribulation rapture. There are many Bible texts to support the claim of a pre/mid-trib rapture. But, the *context of Scripture* does not support the claim – especially within the sequence of apocalyptic prophecy.

Consequently, many sincere people will be overwhelmed when the Great Tribulation begins and they discover they are still on Earth. Many will be bitterly disappointed because they were erroneously led to believe that they would escape the tribulation. Millions will abandon faith in God because they will be overwhelmed with disappointment and disillusioned with their church, their leaders, and their prophetic faith. This, of course, will make the devil very happy. When God's judgments begin, people will not know what or whom to believe.

Second, futurism does not recognize the supreme deception of all ages that is about to take place. The Bible states that the devil *himself* will appear in a physical body in various places around the world. In other words, futurists do not emphasize the brilliant appearing of the devil masquerading as Jesus Christ since they believe they will be raptured. In the radiant form of a god-man, Satan will work mighty miracles in the presence of everyone, including Christians. He will even call fire down out of heaven in full view of enormous crowds. Billions will believe he is Almighty God when, in reality, he is nothing less than that ancient serpent, the predicted Antichrist. This is a very serious flaw with futurism.

Historicism is No Better

Historicism, on the other hand, is the older and less accepted school of prophetic thought. This school teaches that the papacy is the great Antichrist power of Daniel and Revelation. This doctrine traces its origin to England during the 1300's when John Wycliff began to call for reformation within the Roman Catholic Church. His clarion call for the exaltation of Bible truth and for the elimination of man-made doctrines angered prelates and popes for years. Wycliff did not know that his call for fidelity to Bible truth would culminate with the Protestant Reformation in the 18th century. The problem with historicism today is that it is still bashing the pope and the Roman Catholic Church as though the Protestant reformation was still going on.

Historicists fail to recognize that the world is made up of other religious systems comprising billions of people. Admittedly, no religious system on Earth has as much power in the political arena as the Roman Catholic Church. However, there are other religious systems that deviate from Bible truth just as much as papal doctrine and two of these religious systems have even larger numbers of devoted subjects!

The historical view of Revelation is deficient for several reasons, but here are two: First, historicism claims that the bulk of Revelation has been fulfilled. Yet, a careful investigation of what historicists teach reveals that many of their claims cannot be defended in light of historical records and what the Bible says. But, the real problem is that those who believe this doctrine do not anticipate the soon fulfillment of Revelation's predicted events, especially that meteorites and asteroids are coming. Since historicists believe that Revelation, for the most part, has been fulfilled, they will experience the same shock that futurists experience when end-time events occur differently than expected!

The second problem with the historical position is that it teaches that the seven-headed, ten-horned beast of Revelation 13 is the Roman Catholic Church, and its partner, the lamb-like beast, is the United States of America. Historicists teach that these two powers will rule over all the inhabitants of the Earth and set up the mark of the beast. Yes, for awhile, the papacy and the United States will have key roles during the tribulation, but they will not be the only players nor will they be the ultimate players! This world is made up of many political and religious systems, and Revelation's story not only identifies many of them, it also includes all six billion people on Earth.

Opposite Views Produce the Same Effect

Although futurism and historicism are diametrically opposed to each other, they produce the same erroneous conclusion. Futurists plan to be in Heaven while Revelation is being fulfilled, and historicists are convinced that most of the events in Revelation have already happened! The bottom line from both schools is that understanding Revelation and its predicted events are not *essential* to their Christian experience! But this will change the day that God breaks His silence with human beings.

God's Silence

God *appears* to be silent because He has not openly interfered with the actions of man for many centuries. However, God is going to break His long-standing silence with our planet by sending His judgments. These judgments will come from the heavens as well as from deep within the Earth. When they begin, all sinners will know that "The Great Day of the Lord" has come. It will be clear to all that God is dealing with the sinfulness of Earth and everyone will come to experience the fear of Almighty God. When that day arrives, the leaders and people of Earth will unwittingly begin to fulfill prophecies that were written more than two thousand years ago.

This writer is excited about the nearness of these events because the stage is *now* set. The end-time players are in place. World leaders are ostensibly seeking peace and unity – a one-world coalition of nations governed by international law. Global leaders say they want peace and safety for all peoples, but progress is slow and illusive. The basic problem is this: The heart of man is selfish. Greed, arrogance and pride are at the root of madness, war and unrest. But, the coming judgments of God will change the political structures of the world overnight. God is about to grant control of the world to seven religious systems, the Antichrist and ten political leaders – eighteen players total. They don't know it yet, but God has planned these events for thousands of years.

One day very soon, mortals on a tiny speck of a planet called Earth will know that Almighty God, Owner of the Universe, has summoned man to rendezvous before His everlasting throne of righteousness. Science will confirm all that the Bible predicts. Will you and I be prepared? I hope so.



The Morning Word
www.morningword.net · Lawton, OK
© 1994

