

Mayan apocalypse: panic spreads as December 21 nears

Fears that the end of the world is nigh have spread across the world with only days until the end of the Mayan calendar, with doomsday-mongers predicting a cataclysmic end to the history of Earth.

That's from a British newspaper, the [Telegraph](#), but you only have to Google "Mayan Calendar" to find lots of similar items. There seems to be no basis at all for the idea that the Mayans thought the world would end at this point, let alone that it actually will. But it's certainly gotten people excited.

Ironically, people seem to be much less excited about climate change. That's ironic for two reasons. First, it's at least conceivable that the climate will hit a tipping point with catastrophic (though probably not apocalyptic) consequences. And second, what destroyed the Mayan civilization wasn't some supernatural event tied to their calendar. It was probably climate change, according to archaeologists.

As the [NY Times](#) reports,

The early classic Maya period — about A.D. 450 to 660 — “was remarkably wet,” said an author of the study, Douglas Kennett, a geo-archaeologist at Penn State. “There was a proliferation of population, an increase in agriculture and a rise in divine kings that became prominent leaders.”

But then things dried up. The researchers compared the climate record with an existing “war index” — a log of hostile events based on how often certain keywords occurred in Maya inscriptions on stone monuments — and found a strong correlation between drought and warfare between cities.

Climate change was a real threat to the Mayans, and it's a real threat to us. Somehow, however, it's easier to get people riled up over a fantasy threat. Maybe this is an innate feature of human psychology.

In light of this human psychological characteristic, we may need to take a different approach to informing people about climate change. In that regard, I would like to take this occasion to issue a stern warning:

Unless steps are taken CO2 levels will eventually rise from the current level to **666** ppm.
We all know what that means, don't we?



Vision of the Apocalypse by Hieronymus Bosch (from the Guardian)