

Witnesses give world five years at the most

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Within months, or at the most five years, the end of the world as we have known it will occur and a thousand-year reign of Jesus will begin.

This is the view of the approximately 400,000-member sect calling itself Jehovah's Witnesses.

According to Erroll Burton, Paradise Valley Unit of Jehovah's Witnesses, the prediction is based on the estimate that 1975 will mark the end of 6,000 years since the time of Adam and Eve, and that, according to scripture, is when Armageddon will occur (Rev. 16:16).

By Armageddon, he explained, he doesn't mean the destruction of the world, but rather "a change in the political system of things," when "all presently existing influences must be eliminated."

"After 6,000 years of the deterioration of mankind, there will be 1,000 years of refining mankind," he said. "At the end of that period, man will be perfect, as Adam and Eve were before the fall."

He said here would be no death and no need for the act of reproduction.

Men will know when this period begins, Burton declared, by signs of the downfall of organized religion. He cited Revelation 17, which describes a "great harlot . . . with whom the king of the earth have committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication, (sitting) on a scarlet-colored beast full of names of blasphemy . . ."

"The beast is the political organization, for example, the United Nations," said Burton. "Organized religion is riding on the back of the political organizations which are pulling the strings."

He predicted people "will abandon religion as we see it today with its hypocritical priests and their handouts. Then the political leaders will abolish religion. Then will come the destruction of politics in the battle of Armageddon. The survivors will be those who have stayed obedient to God and neutral in politics."

This is why Burton said he will have nothing to do with political matters.

"I will not take sides in controversial issues. I will not promote any political party or try to oust any politician. I do not vote. All politics is highly manipulated."

Burton suggested that if everyone refused to vote, "it would be interesting to see how politicians would work it out."

He said Witnesses will not be involved in social work or charitable work. For one thing, the end of the world as we know it is imminent, so why bother?

For another, "I know how much money is skimmed off by these charitable organizations," he said.

He objects to the Salvation Army's work "because it is a religious organization. We as a group have no interfaith action at all. You can get a pig out of the mire and clean it up, but you can't clean it up by getting in the mire with it. These are false religions."

Witnesses give allegiance only to Jehovah, and so refuse to vote, do jury duty or salute the flag. All Witnesses are regarded as missionary ministers and consider themselves exempt from the draft.

They deny the Christian Trinity, saying instead that Jesus is a sort of agent, sent to establish Jehovah's kingdom and redeem mankind, and the Holy Ghost is simply the "power of Jehovah" on earth.