

The Day Millions Almost Perished

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Let me ask you three questions about events that are called "defining moments." Are you old enough to remember where you were on November 22, 1963 when you learned that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated? Do you remember where you were on September 11, 2001 when you learned that two commercial airplanes crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City? Do you remember where you were on September 29, 2004 at 5:45 P.M. EDT?

You are probably wondering, "Why should I remember that moment?" Here are two reasons. First, September 29 should be remembered as the day that millions of people *almost* perished. If the asteroid, *Toutatis*, had impacted Earth at 5:45 P.M. EDT, the moment of its closest approach, several hundred million people would have evaporated immediately and hundreds of millions more would have died shortly thereafter. *Toutatis*, a three mile long asteroid, whizzed past us at 72,000 m.p.h. – missing Earth by less than a million miles.

In recorded history, nothing this large has ever passed by our planet and in astronomical terms, a million miles is a mere whisker. *Toutatis* was discovered in 1989 by French astronomer, C. Pollas, and he named the odd-shaped asteroid after a Celtic god that feared nothing except the sky falling. If *Toutatis* had impacted Earth on September 29, the global result would have been second only to the destruction caused by the flood in Noah's day.

It is interesting that this catastrophic possibility did not receive a lot of media attention. Initially, a number of asteroid trackers privately believed that *Toutatis* had a high probability of impacting Earth. When the asteroid became visible in late July, astronomers concluded that it would miss Earth and this made the "fly-by" a nonevent. September 29, 2004 passed as a normal day and the day *millions almost perished* has been forgotten.

However, there is a second reason why September 29, 2004 should be remembered. This reason can be boiled down to one word, "example." The fly by of *Toutatis* is a recent demonstration affirming that Bible prophecy will be fulfilled. Twenty years ago, people scoffed at the idea that Bible prophecy predicts two asteroid impacts. The scoffers have been silenced. When Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 broke into 21 pieces and plunged into Jupiter in July 1994, astronomers around the world witnessed impacts on Jupiter so powerful that one crater could hold three planets the size of Earth!

A growing number of people are awakening to the simple reality that God's Word predicts two asteroid impacts. Two thousand years ago, the prophet John wrote, "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. 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 [poisonous]." (Revelation 8:8-11, italics and insertion mine)

If you are not familiar with the use of Old Testament language in Revelation, you might wonder how a huge mountain and blazing star could destroy a third of the sea, a third of the living creatures, a third of the ships, a third of the rivers and springs of water. The answer is relatively simple.

It was customary in ancient times for kings to destroy *two-thirds* of the people who rebelled against them. (2 Samuel 8:1,2; Ezekiel 5:12; Zechariah 13:8) This imagery is used in the seven trumpets twelve times! The idea is that God would be justified in destroying two-thirds of Earth because of our rebellion against His authority. Because God is a very generous king, He will destroy one-third and spare two-thirds. So, the seven trumpets (seven first plagues) will be a time of seven judgments mixed with mercy.

Conversely, the seven bowls (the seven last plagues) will contain no mercy. When the first asteroid impacts an ocean, the resulting tsunami will destroy millions of people living near the ocean. When the second asteroid impacts a continent, the resulting ground waves will fracture the geologic strata which will contaminate underground aquifers. Thus, survivors living long distances away from the impact zone will die after drinking the poisonous water.

God sees the violence, hatred, sexual immorality and dishonesty taking place on Earth. He has something to say to mankind, but unfortunately, the only way He can get mankind's attention is by destroying a third of our physical world. The books of Daniel and Revelation contain a compelling story for this generation and unfortunately, few people are interested enough in God's Word to take the time to understand His prophecies.

As I see it, *Toutatis* was a shot across Earth's bow that meant very little to most observers. For this reason, September 29 was not a defining moment. But, be assured that a defining moment is coming. Soon, out of the clear blue sky, a great pair of asteroids will reach their destination and I am sure the survivors will never forget where they were on that awesome day.