

Thoughts on Flavours of the Apocalypse

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The goal of this discussion is to explore the apocalypse that planet earth will certainly face in the future. I want to discuss flavours of the apocalypse and what these will look like, taste like, smell like and feel like.

The apocalypse is coming, I know this! Planet earth will have an apocalypse. I can say this with absolute certainty. I can make such a rash claim with such clarity and decisiveness based on absolute scientific fact. With certainty our sun will die in some billions of years and in the process destroy the planet. You can rightly claim that this is not a concern we today need to address and I would agree. So why then talk apoc?

We need to talk about an apocalypse because we will have catastrophic events. This is statistically inevitable, 100% probability. While the sun's death or the heat death of the universe are remote, there are a great many other cataclysmic events that may take us well before that time. We can predict that a number of natural ones will happen with certainty but whether they will pose existential threats is a point for debate. We cannot claim to have any level of certainty about the timing to the severity of such events. Natural events that have the potential to be apocalyptic include but are not limited to: big rocks from space, coronal mass ejections, cosmic ray bursts, super volcanoes, or the less dramatic, plagues that destroy people or our food supply.

Let me say I am a great believer in science and I generally believe that science will solve many problems; it will likely allow us to survive many of these events on a cataclysmic level. It will change the survival of society and human institutional structures.

These natural events, we have little control over — some we may, with advancement, be able to mitigate, some not so much. They will be a survival challenge.

My concern over an apocalypse turns much more to the far less predictable anthropogenic apocalypses. These are far more likely but far less certain. By this I mean we can say with certainty the earth is threatened by the natural events, but they are remote and quite likely far off in the future, but decades of good

science tells us they will happen. Natural apocalyptic events are certain but not necessarily in a short time frame of a human life span or even within the span of human history. Some could happen within months or days, we just cannot predict with certitude at this time.

Anthropogenic apocalypses such as nuclear war, EMP attacks, climate change, toxic pollution, biological warfare, creating a plague that kills people or food supply, economic collapse or general disintegration of society are all more likely in the short term, but they are by no means certain as the natural events. They are the apocalypses of choice. Human decisions will make them happen or not.

As a child of the Cold War I have to say I am shocked to still be here. When I graduated from high school I fully expected a full scale nuclear war at any time. I assumed that if we made toys we would play with them. I am in fact impressed by the good in humanity that avoided such a cataclysm. But it ain't over yet. However most prognosticators and pundits now predict that a nuclear war would be much more limited than it would have been in the Cold War.

There may be *less* research into biological weapons, there are many fewer nuclear weapons than in 1978, but now we are screwing the planet with climate change and pollution. Will these types of events create an apocalypse? Not certain but it is a definite possibility. So an apocalypse is a certain event, when, what type, and how severe are unpredictable. So back to the Boy Scouts: Be Prepared.

Without structure, thinking about the apocalypses in the future would be mind-boggling and overwhelming. I would like to put some structure on it. I will use the bulk of this essay to discuss what I like to call “flavours” of the apocalypse. Rather than divide them by causation — that is to say, Natural versus Anthropogenic — I will categorize by the human experience of the apocalypse.

Before I delve into my categories I suppose my definition of what qualifies as an apocalypse would be needed. I consider an apocalypse an event which causes substantial degradation of the quality of life for a large portion of a continent. It would mean large-scale suffering and death of millions of people caused, directly or indirectly, by the event. For example something that drastically reduced food

supply to a continent would meet this definition only if this loss of food supply caused massive starvation and death.

So the first category I would like to examine is what I define as the Blast events. Blast events are those that go “Blast”. Big apocalyptic events where everybody recognizes right away that life is not going to be the same. The types of events that could fall into this category could include full-scale nuclear war, EMP attacks on a continent wide basis, a Yellowstone-type super volcano exploding, impact of a large (1km+) asteroid, or an excessively large coronal mass ejection.

These events will cause immediate death and destruction on a regional basis. We will see large scale panic in the population. Routine resources of the government will be at a minimum overwhelmed, possibly directly destroyed. They will attempt to deploy all resources. Governments will go into a protective mode to fulfill the COG mission, continuity of government. Aid for people will come from what they have left but this will be inadequate for large populations and will dwindle quickly. These kinds of events will involve a failure of critical infrastructure such as transportation, energy distribution, and communications. People in directly affected area may be killed outright. Nearby areas will have very quick failures of governmental institutions. They will be overrun with refugees, injured and dying people. More peripherally affected areas will quickly run short of supplies because of supporting the worse-off areas. If the event is only regional, resources will pour in from other areas.

This is the classic apocalypse for which many preppers prepare. Having tons of preserved food, specialized gear, a bug-out location and backup transportation will avail you well in these events if you are not directly affected. With the panic of the population we should expect the rule of law to erode quickly. The police forces will be overwhelmed quickly and may flee their posts. This has been seen in comparatively small disasters (comparative to an apocalyptic event) such as Hurricane Katrina where fifty police employees abandoned their posts during the disaster. There will not be enough first responders and military to keep order and support the population. In places with massive militaries like the USA they

will not be necessarily deployed to help civilians, but kept for defence against perceived bone-pickers coming from outside.

This is one type of apocalypse where the rich and the powerful may not maintain their position. If commerce structures and electricity fail then they will become as desperate as everyone else, they may start with some advantages of isolation from others and more materials but they may not. This will be an apocalypse that demands the formation of survival groups. Groups of convenience and familiarity will form to survive. Everyone will hurt in this apocalypse. If there are regions of the world that are not immediately affected, they will be affected as resources are diverted to help affected areas. There will be refugees, possible spread of disease, and possible conflict as desperate people look to survive. Conflict among survivor groups is almost inevitable where there is no rule of law.

Understanding when to bug-out or break out the survival plan is fairly obvious, right away is usually the answer. The prepped will have an advantage but they should act as if they have no preps. By this I mean they should be scavenging and group building with everyone else. The majority of available resources will be available right away. There will likely be a period of stunned inaction where most people who were not mentally prepared will wait for rescue by the authorities. This will result in a period of little law and lots of inaction. The mentally prepared and criminals will be the first to act. Criminals will see the police as unable to react so they will take advantage. The mentally prepared will recognize the vacuum and use it to their advantage.

The Blast event will smell like... not victory, but destruction and death. It will taste like dirt and blood. Anxiety and fear will rule the day. Look for the calm but not complacent to join with.

The Burn is how I would characterize the second types of apocalypses. These are apocalyptic events where most people take some time, months probably, to recognize there will be a failure of the system. It is like being burned by a fire, you know its going to hurt but it takes a little more time than the Blast events.

This includes things like a very virulent plague or bio warfare event. It could also include climate change or economic collapse. Those may also fall into the next category depending on the rapidity with which they happen.

A bio warfare event, whether it kills people or their food supply, would fall into this category. Or something like the Black Plague that killed between 30% and 60% of the population in four years. People knew it was bad, it radically changed political and economic structure and brought hardship. If something that serious happened today we would be far worse off because our production is so much more interdependent than it was at that time. Every town was basically self-supporting 400 years ago, now, in the industrialized countries, virtually none are. The most survivable communities in North America after an apocalyptic event with ironically be Native and Inuit communities.

This class of apocalypse gives you time to act and think. It will not result in the immediate failure of government and the rule of law. That will come after some time. I am unaware of any research, not even sure how you do the research, that would tell us what percent of the population would need to die off before there was a catastrophic failure of infrastructure such as power plants and power distribution, and institutions such hospitals, police and ultimately the government. These would happen more as an effect of snowballing absences than because of the actual death rate. If this were caused by a pandemic for example, once there was about a ten percent death rate, maybe even less, you would find people stay home for fear of catching the disease. The lack of people would begin to reduce the efficiency of things like the power grid and first responders. Even at a ten percent death rate, you would find that would likely entail at least that many infected, and that proportion of a population would create cascading failures.

A bio warfare event that killed a major food crop in one season in one place may in fact result in warfare or but it would also certainly result in starvation which again would begin to reduce the personnel available to run the country and protect people. It should be kept in mind that three major food crops make up sixty percent of the world's food calories. Because the practice of monoculture is widespread crops are vulnerable to disease to some degree. The

world's food supply is dependent on very few species of crop. It is also dependent on availability of fertilizers and transportation. Transportation of food is essential for any modern city. The failures would not be sudden but happen over a period of months to years.

With this kind of event you are likely to see rising violence as food scarcity and infrastructure instability increases. This type of event would cause a collapse of national governments in favour of more local divisions over a period of time, or national governments would have a steadily decreasing control. The difficulty with prepping for this kind of event is when do you call it done and isolate yourself. Too early and you will needlessly run your resources out. It would be better to wait until you see direct threats or risk for your community. This gives you a significant amount of time to build a community and find safety. These kinds of events will result in a lot of people hoping for intervention, but interventions will come less and be less effective over time. The rich are likely to maintain their control and separate themselves in this process at some point.

The Burn events will feel like a increasing impending sense of doom. The smell will be that of slow mouldering. It will look like old decay and slow wearing down, but it will pick up the pace and begin to look and feel more like a blast as you approach the maximum failure points. Seek out those who are thinking and planning. Those who talk of the final results, not those who talk about recovery and things getting better, they may be right but if they are wrong the lack of preparation will be catastrophic for you.

The last type of apocalypse to consider is what I term the Simmer events. The simmer can be thought of as a glacial apocalypse taking more than a couple of years to truly wreak havoc. The idea of this category relates to the apocryphal belief that if put a frog in a pot and slowly boil the water you will cook the frog before it realizes it is being cooked. Truth is some sick bastard tried this to find out the frog will try to leave when the water becomes too warm. But the analogy is still a good one. The apocalypse comes slowly enough many don't recognize it for the existential threat that it is. Some pandemics, climate change, a possible AI takeover, or economic failure could all fall in this category.

This type of apocalypse does not see a failure of government and rule of law for years. When we look at the fall of the Roman Empire (Western Roman Empire) they had 200 years of failing policies and weakening of their strength until finally in 476 AD Odoacer forced the Roman Emperor Augustulus to abdicate. The Western Empire's strength, power and wealth had been declining for 200 years but nobody really recognized it. However if you could have taken a 2nd century Roman to the 5th century they might have recognized how the Empire had failed.

Simmer events will be the hardest to identify. The tendency will be to ignore and rationalize, "Just hard times", "Things have to get better". There will be no obvious way to tell that we are in a slow simmering apocalypse. It could be true that it is just a down turn or bad times, but how do you tell? I don't pretend to have the answer on this one. The advantage for the prepper is you can be prepping the whole time waiting for the final collapse. Harder to tell when to activate the plan. This is where it is important to prep with things you will use and cycle.

In a simmering apocalypse we won't have a failure of government, but we might have a failure to govern well. There may be spreading regionalization and dissent but war or revolution may not come for years. The rich will certainly maintain their elevated status and the poor, as always, will be the first to suffer and be brought lower. The difficulty is we could be in a simmering apocalypse right now. Climate change may wreak future havoc, but no one can tell for sure where it will go. Climate change will certainly be a factor but the question remains as to whether humanity will find solutions and be resilient. Few preppers think about or consider the Simmer event because it is so hard to see its boundaries, but I would bet this is the type that will cause a societal collapse.

This apocalypse will appear to be nothing. It will sneak up on us in the night. We won't smell the corruption until it is too late because we will become inured to the problems before we know they are problems. It will feel like dysthymic depression, low grade but always present. Seek out those who pay attention to the global perspective. Those who think about the potential of global problems

playing out in the collapse of society. Preparing won't hurt you but it may save you. Your most important prep will be finding those of like mind.

So there you have my three flavours of the apocalypse. Blast, Burn and Simmer. One of them will get us with absolute certainty. We could be in one right now but it is very difficult to tell for sure. So how do we prep for such an array of possibilities? I would suggest we start with awareness and slow preps. Personal preparedness starts with thinking, not presumption. It starts with training yourself to be aware, not just of the tactical, immediate situation, but the strategic, world wide situation. I cannot claim, I doubt anyone could, to be able to identify the warning signs of a Simmer apocalypse. But ongoing planning and thinking won't lead you wrong. Blasts will make themselves known with certainty in short time, don't wait for rescue in these situations, act decisively. Burns will become obvious, look at the early signs and start planning and acting.