


















MAYAN PROPHECIES








VERSION (SUBTITLES)





REVISED: JULY 26, 2013




| SCENE | TIME | SCRIPT |
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| INTRO | | INTRODUCTION |
|  | 00:15 | After steamrolling over Jamaica, Hurricane Gilbert churned westward toward Yucatan, homeland of the Maya. On September 14, 1988, this force 5 monster crashed ashore with a storm surge over two stories high, leaving widespread flooding, 200 dead, and more than 60,000 homes destroyed in its wake. Maya astronomers feared these great killing storms and could read their time in the stars. |
|  | 00:53 | One of the surviving Maya books, the Dresden Codex, may predict the end of time in a great flood from a hurricane's wrath. On the last page, a cosmic monster gushes water from its mouth and from sky glyphs on its body. Is a hurricane the disaster Maya astronomers saw in the heavens long ago, or is their apocalypse still in our future? |
| CREDITS | | OPENING CREDITS |
|  | 01:22 | MAYAN PROPHECIES Justin Tomillo, Steve Cooper, Shai Fishman, Julie Amato |
|  | 01:40 | To record the passage of time, the Maya developed a 260-day ritual cycle, made up of thirteen numbers and twenty names. The Maya kept a second 365 day solar calendar of 18 months, each lasting 20 days, plus 5 extra days to complete the year. This calendar determined the growing season and the annual return of the rains. The Maya combined these two cycles to create a calendar round, lasting 52 solar years. |
|  | 02:16 | Using these calendars, the Maya recorded dates in books and on markers and buildings such as the Temple of Inscriptions in Palenque. Spanning three tablets, this is the largest classic Maya inscription. These glyphs indicate specific dates and cover hundreds of years, using another calendar called the Long Count. The Long Count records time periods in baktuns, katuns, tuns, winals, and kins. A kin is a day, a winal is 20 days, a tun is almost a year, a katun is just under 20 years, and a baktun is just over 394 years. |

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|  | 03:06 | <p>The left and center tablets chronicle events in the city of Palenque in the 9th baktun, a time period from 435 to 830 in our modern calendar. The right tablet also commemorates the life of King Pacal and lists dates beginning in the past and extending thousands of years into the future. Like our centuries and millennia, the Maya celebrated the beginnings of new katuns and baktuns. All Maya kept the same ritual, solar and long count calendars, using them to describe the past and foretell the future.</p> |
|  | 03:45 | <p>The homeland of the Maya stretched from southern Mexico to northern Central America. The great Maya cities of Uxmal, Chichen Itza, Tikal, and Palenque have buildings designed as observatories. In these structures, Maya astronomers could predict the rains and foretell disasters, then and perhaps for the future. We will visit each of these cities at a specific time to discover how astronomers saw the future in the stars.</p> |
| UXMAL | | |
|  | 04:16 | <p>Our story begins in the parched city of Uxmal at the end of the dry season. Here much of the porous land drains without forming rivers. Natural lakes are rare. For survival, the Maya created great urban centers like Uxmal to store rainwater through the dry season. These cities grew in a rainforest that had never fed so many before. Water became the currency of power, always accompanied by the threat of thirst and famine when the rains failed and the city's great cisterns ran dry. Every year the astronomers of Uxmal watched the Sun's position in the sky to confirm the calendar date when the rains would come. At night they searched for star patterns to know when to prepare for killer hurricanes.</p> |
|  | 05:19 | <p><i>Our city's underground cisterns are almost empty and our fields are ready for rain. Chaac, god of lightning and rain, give us a sign! Your masks cover our buildings: now, we need your rain! Today the afternoon Sun shines on the steps of my great pyramid. Chaac is speaking to me. I must climb these steps to his temple on top of the pyramid, facing the setting Sun. Afternoon shadows climb up the pyramid. Finally the Sun's light enters Chaac's temple. This is the sign! In two 20-day months, the Sun will stand overhead at noon and the rains will come. Until then, I must ration our dwindling supplies of water. Chaac has spoken!</i></p> |
|  | 06:24 | <p><i>Omens of danger appear in the heavens whenever a disaster lurks in our future. Every night I watch stars circling that star - especially the pattern of a cupped hand. When this hand is on the horizon at sunset, the sky gods will no longer protect us from fierce storms bringing floods, death, and perhaps the end of time.</i></p> |
| CHICHEN ITZA | | |

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|  | 06:53 | East of Uxmal lies the city of Chichen Itza, once home to over 35,000 people. Here powerful astronomers watched the heavens to set calendar dates for the coming rains and for human sacrifices to honor the sky gods. Natural sinkholes with fresh water, called cenotes, attracted the Maya to this area. A cenote forms when the roof of an under-ground river collapses. These buried rivers flow throughout the dry season, providing water until the rain returns. |
|  | 07:28 | The El Castillo pyramid dominates Chichen Itza's main plaza. It is a temple to the feathered serpent god Kukulcan, whose head adorns the bases of the staircase balustrades. Using the steps of this pyramid, the Maya could count all the days of their solar calendar. Each of its 4 staircases has 91 steps, for 364 steps in all, with a top step into the temple - one step for each day of the year. |
|  | 08:13 | According to legend, Kukulcan returns to his pyramid each spring, descending the staircase in an undulating shadow before the beginning of the rainy season. The Maya believed that the great flying serpent god traveled ahead of the rain god Chaac, preparing for rain as his tail moved the wind and swept the earth clean. |
|  | 08:38 | The Maya built observatories, like the Caracol at Chichen Itza to watch their serpent god who appeared in the heavens, as the wandering planet Venus. Through motions of the brilliant Venus, they determined the will of Kukulcan. The Maya believed that the feathered serpent was most powerful when Venus appeared near the Pleiades star cluster in spring. This tiny cluster became the rattles adorning his tail. |
|  | 09:14 | <i>Tonight I must climb to the top of my observatory. This passageway leads to the highest floor above the trees. There I will have a clear view of the horizon and can monitor the position of Kukulcan's star as well as the Sun, Moon, and other stars. Tonight the rattles of the feathered serpent are very close to his body, and he's coiled to strike. Tomorrow we must pay tribute to Kukulcan for the rains he will soon send.</i> |
|  | 09:59 | <i>Crowds will gather for a great festival. Many must be sacrificed to honor our powerful feathered serpent god with human blood, the most precious gift we have to offer. Our priests have prepared the chac mool altar on the Temple of Many Columns. Those chosen to die are covered in blue paint. Only the sacrifice of their beating hearts can appease Kukulcan and bring rain from the sky. Our fate depends on shedding human blood for rain.</i> |
| TIKAL | | |
|  | 11:06 | The Maya carved the great city of Tikal out of the rainforest. In this city of up to 100,000, all water came from the sky. The city depended on lakes and cisterns to store rainwater for the dry season. Limestone quarries for skyscrapers also became catch basins for water. Tikal's rulers cleared the rainforest and channeled the water in swamps to grow crops. Tikal's power depended on storing enough water to last until the rains returned. |

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|  | 11:41 | The astronomers of Tikal used these giant pyramids to predict when the rainy season would begin. These ruins were once great temples aligned to the rising Sun, covered in stucco and painted brilliant hues of red, blue, yellow and white. The Maya felled thousands of trees to heat the ovens that turned limestone into stucco for these magnificent buildings and plazas. |
|  | 12:15 | <i>Our great king Hasaw Chan K'awil designed these new pyramids to reach above the rainforest and become a gigantic solar observatory. Today, we must climb the highest pyramid to watch the rising Sun. This is the year's shortest day and the Sun rises farthest to the south, over the Pyramid of the Jaguar Priest. From this date forward, the Sun will rise a little more to the north each day. In a few months, I will observe sunrise from the Jaguar Priest's pyramid. When the Sun finally rises to the north of the King's Pyramid, the rains will come.</i> |
|  | 13:10 | <i>Many years ago, long before these pyramids were built, Tikal was at war with its neighbors and preparing for an attack. Suddenly one morning, the war god's brilliant star appeared for the first time before sunrise. Our astronomers realized that the enemy would attack then to gain the favor of the sky gods.</i> |
|  | 13:34 | <i>As the Sun rose on that dreadful day, the mighty army of Caracol approached through the rainforest cover. After a bloody battle, our rulers and astronomers were captured and sacrificed. For over four lifetimes, there was no building, no monument making, no spirit of life allowed in Tikal. The sky gods had forsaken us.</i> |
|  | 14:08 | <i>Less than 3 years later, in the victorious city of Caracol, a sky serpent devoured the Sun completely - day became night, with only a glowing ring where the Sun once was, and the brilliant war god's star nearby. The sky gods were celebrating Caracol's victory. Many believe our time will end when a serpent devours the Sun forever.</i> |
| PALENQUE | | |
|  | 14:45 | In the foothills of Mexico's southern mountains, lies the Maya city of Palenque. A spring feeds a stream flowing under the main palace, cascading to the plain below. Blessed with abundant rain and flowing rivers, the artisans of Palenque had time to create some of the most elaborate and exquisite Mayan art, and the most delicate of buildings, especially the city's central plaza. Here inscriptions connect the kings of Palenque to the heavens and describe the beginning of the Maya long count cycle. |
|  | 15:45 | A white throne room centers the palace complex. Within it, lies an oval tablet showing the coronation of Pacal, the Great - the most powerful ruler of Palenque, and the most famous of all Maya kings. Crowning him is his mother, Lady Sak K'uk, perhaps the most powerful woman in Mayan history. |

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|  | 16:10 | <p><i>To witness the cosmic power of our divine rulers, you must visit the burial chamber of my son, the great Pacal, on the year's shortest day. Watch as the setting Sun enters the temple and lights its inscriptions. Then descend a narrow stone staircase to ground level to my son's tomb. If you open my son's sarcophagus, you will see his body, painted red in preparation for his return.</i></p> |
|  | 17:31 | <p><i>The sarcophagus lid tells of Pacal's cosmic journey after death. He reclines in a bowl symbolizing the Sun. At death, following the path of the setting Sun, he entered the underworld where he conquered the monster of darkness, whose jaws still encircle him. Above his body, rises our sacred ceiba tree, connecting the Earth and sky, reaching toward the heavens in celebration of Pacal's return with the rising Sun.</i></p> |
|  | 18:07 | <p><i>A starry cross stands upright in the predawn sky like a glorious ceiba tree. Along the horizon stretches a hazy white path where the dead walk, and where the glowing body of a cosmic monster waits with jaws open wide, waiting for Pacal. Then Pacal rises as the Sun from the underworld, conquering the cosmic monster. My grandson built three temples to celebrate his father's cosmic journey and the beginning of our time. This temple faces winter's rising Sun and glorifies sacred warfare. The second is an Earth temple, facing sunset on the year's longest day - at the height of our growing season. The tablet within shows another sacred tree, covered in symbols of plants. The tallest is a Sky temple, facing winter sunset. Its tablet has a third sacred tree, and tells the story of the 3 hearthstones of creation around a sacred fire.</i></p> |
|  | 19:26 | <p><i>These 3 temples are symbols of these 3 hearthstones. There are also 3 special stars in the pattern you call Orion. These are our cosmic hearthstones, encircling their own glowing sacred fire. The time cycle that began with these hearthstones ended on Dec. 21st in your year 2012 - a date when some of you, who do not know us well, believe that the world would end. Of course, it did not.</i></p> |
|  | 20:04 | <p><i>We use many cycles to measure the passage of time. To measure times like your centuries and millennia, we use a Long Count. On your December 21st, 2012, our Long Count had a new beginning as our date changed from 12.19.19.17.19 to 13.0.0.0.0. Like your year 2000, this was cause for celebration, not the end of the world. Especially since it occurred on the anniversary, of Pacal's rising with the Sun.</i></p> |
|  | 20:56 | <p><i>There has been a subtle change in the sky in the 1,300 years since Pacal's reign in Palenque. Due to the wobble of Earth's spin axis, different stars rise with the Sun in each season. At the time of Pacal, the glowing Milky Way band was above the Sun at sunrise on the winter solstice. Now in December, the Sun is in front of a dark rift in the Milky Way, near the direction of the galaxy's center.</i></p> |

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|  | 21:27 | <p>No longer do we imagine the milky way band as a cosmic monster encircling the sky. It is really the disk of our Milky Way galaxy, one of billions of galaxies in the universe. And the cosmic monster of the Maya is really our star system of over 200 billion suns. Does this mean that galactic forces are now aligned? Did the Maya predict the end of the world? We have no data to indicate that the Maya recognized this alignment. There is no connection between the Earth-centered Maya cosmos and our modern universe.</p> |
|  | 22:05 | <p>Classic Maya civilization did experience a great apocalypse, but it was over a thousand years ago - long before the Spanish Conquest. With no warning for their astronomers or kings, this great civilization collapsed. For over a millennium, the major cities of the Maya have stood abandoned - deserted by their citizens, conquered by weather, and reclaimed by the rainforest.</p> |
|  | 22:37 | <p>At their culture's height, many of the Maya faced the worst drought in thousands of years. It devastated a civilization that had cut down the rainforest to grow crops and destroyed urban centers that could not store enough water for their people. We can imagine astronomers watching the heavens and predicting rain, and rulers bleeding for water. But year after year, the rains did not come, and drought turned into famine.</p> |
|  | 23:07 | <p>Soon the rainforest claimed the monumental architecture and exquisite artwork. In less than a hundred years, over a hundred thousand Maya disappeared, abandoning their astronomers, who no longer talked to the sky gods - and their priests, who demanded human blood for the promise of rain that never came. They left their parched cities and their withered fields, rejecting the divine right and Earthly power of their kings. By the thousands they returned to the rainforest and mountains to a sustainable population and way of life.</p> |
|  | 23:51 | <p>As we sense the fragility of our own culture today, we may discover a timeless warning in the ruins of these great Maya cities, silent sentinels, witnesses of the apocalypse of the Maya.</p> |
|  | 24:08 | <p><i>May the collapse of our great cities, lead you to a sustainable future.</i></p> |
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