

Survey: 'End Times' Blamed for Natural Disasters

Nearly four in 10 U.S. residents say the severity of recent natural disasters such as **Superstorm Sandy** is evidence the world is coming to an end, as predicted by the Bible, while more than six in 10 blame it on climate change, according to a poll released on Thursday.

The survey by the Public Religion Research Institute in partnership with the Religion News Service found political and religious disagreement on what is behind severe weather, which this year has included extreme heat and drought.

Most Catholics (60 percent) and white non-evangelical Protestants (65 percent) say they believe disasters like hurricanes and floods are the result of climate change.

But nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of white evangelical Protestants say they think the storms are evidence of the "**end times**" as predicted by the Bible.

Overall, 36 percent point to end times and 63 percent to climate change.

PRRI research director Daniel Cox said that some respondents—including 75 percent of non-white Protestants—believe extreme weather is both evidence of end times and the result of climate change.

"No one really knows how (end times) would look and how God would bring it about," Cox said.

Politics also color perceptions of the weather, the survey found. More than three-quarters of Democrats and six in 10 independents believe that the weather has become more extreme over the last few years, while less than half of Republicans

say they have perceived such a shift.

“Their political leanings are even affecting how they experience weather, which is pretty fascinating,” said Cox.

The January-to-November period in the United States this year was the warmest first 11 months of any year on record for the contiguous states. And 2012 will likely surpass 1998 as the warmest year on record for the nation, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Call for Action

Most climate scientists believe that the warming trend for the nation and the world is tied to human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels.

Extreme storms like Sandy, along with more intense droughts, wildfires and floods, are projected by some as the result of climate change, though scientists are reluctant to attribute individual events to global warming.

The PRRI survey found that while there is disagreement about the causes of global warming, there is widespread agreement about the need for action.

Two-thirds of Americans say the U.S. government should do more to address climate change—including most of those who believe global warming is due to natural weather patterns, the survey found.

It also found that 15 percent of Americans believe that the end of the world, as predicted by the New Testament’s **Book of Revelation**, will occur in their lifetime. Some 2 percent believe that the end of the world, as predicted by the ancient Mayans, will occur by the end of this year.

Some people who say they believe in end times do not act on that belief in their everyday lives, said Cal Jillson, political science professor at Southern Methodist University.

"I think that's their way of expressing a deep commitment to Biblical literalism," said Jillson. "If you sat down with them and said, 'Do you really think that within the next few years we'll experience the end times?' they probably don't A good number of these people are saving for retirement."

The survey of 1,018 adults was conducted between December 5 and December 9. The margin of error was plus or minus 3 percentage points.