

## Is it time to wipe the slate clean again?

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And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. Yes it was. Fast-forward several thousand years and here is God, holding his massive Etch A-Sketch depicting his beautiful creation. Holding it in front of him, he gives it a massive shake, clearing the image. He can now begin again. Is the COVID-19 virus a precursor to a massive human reset? Throughout history, seemingly advanced cultures, societies and cities have crumbled into obscurity. Others were mysteriously abandoned and many others pose mind-boggling questions. Noah's Ark, Gobekli Tepe, the Olmec culture, Mayans, Anasazi and even the legendary lost city of Atlantis. Legends, myths, ancient tales and actual archaeological discoveries all combine to reveal a litany of strange occurrences over the course of human history. Many times in our past have our ancestors created technologically advanced societies, architecture and cities, only to perish or vanish. It was if some natural cycle determined it was time to wipe humankind from the face of the planet and start over. Are we seeing signs of this now? I have heard recent stories of locusts in parts of the world. East Africa has witnessed the worst outbreak in 70 years. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. Coincidence? Plagues are another sure sign we're in for a heap of trouble. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. Is a pandemic considered a plague? Oxford published a paper last year on human extinction in the journal Scientific Reports. It found that people don't seem to see the loss of humanity as uniquely tragic. In fact, they find the extinction of animal species worse. Our species' extinction has been predicted for centuries. A study in 2008 resulted in a list of risk factors that may lead to our demise. It speculated that we have a one in five chance of being wiped out before the year 2100. The study cites nuclear weapons, nanotech weapons, AI running amok, and an engineered pandemic as likely causes of humankind's premature departure from terra firma. Let's not forget natural disasters and a possible impact with an asteroid or comet. Interestingly, those taking part in the study were asked to offer some recommendations to governments and policy-makers. Several wanted nuclear disarmament, or at least lowering the number of weapons under the threshold for existential catastrophe, as well as reducing stocks of highly enriched uranium and making nuclear arsenals harder to accidentally launch. One option was forming global biotech-related governance, legislation and enforcement, or even a global body like the UN to study and act on catastrophic risk. There was a lot of interest in developing defences against misuses of biotechnology, and a recognition for the need of unbiased early detection systems for a variety of risks. Other suggestions included raising awareness of the problems, the need to build deeper societal resiliency, prepare for categories of disasters rather than individual types, building refuges and changing energy consumption patterns. Let's not follow in these footsteps: In February 1923, the 600 residents of the small Brazilian village of Hoer Verde simply vanished overnight, leaving their possessions and food behind. All around was a chilling silence. No birds, no insects, nothing. The Anasazi tribe is regarded as one of the most sophisticated civilizations of the North American continent. Their civilization emerged around the 12th century BCE, and remains best known for stone and adobe structures built along cliff walls including Cliff Palace in Mesa Verde National Park, the White House Ruins and Pueblo Bonito at the northern rim of Chaco Canyon. They didn't necessarily vanish, but for some reason abandoned their homeland in the 12th and 13th centuries. One of the most powerful empires of Southeast Asia, the Khmer civilization, spread from modern-day Cambodia into Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar and Malaysia. The empire dates back to 802 AD. Other than stone inscriptions, no written records survive, so what we know about them is pieced together from archaeological investigations, reliefs in temple walls and the reports of outsiders. The Khmers practiced both Hinduism and Buddhism and built intricate temples, towers and other structures. Their ultimate fate remains a mystery. In south-central Mexico was once a grand Pre-Columbian civilization that constructed incredible colossal heads, invented the concept of the number zero and essentially laid the foundation for every Mesoamerican culture that was to follow. The Olmec civilization might even have been the first civilization in the western hemisphere to develop a writing system, and possibly invented the compass and the Mesoamerican calendar. Dating to around 1500 BCE, the Olmec civilization deteriorated and collapsed. We can ponder the great pyramids of Egypt, Stonehenge and other marvels. I find it strange that if our species possessed great knowledge thousands of years ago, shouldn't we be further ahead in our evolution today? It seems just as we were on the brink of greatness, a mysterious force sent us scattering into the wind, leaving behind only unanswered questions. Fortunately, now that we're at the height of our technological smarts, we can leave behind mountains of data, information, and details of every aspect of our society. Unlike our ancestors, we have the power to monitor, predict and fight against future disasters, if we all work together. Maybe we should

concentrate on leaving something truly remarkable behind.

