



**W A I T I N G  
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W O R L D**

Doomsday cult leader David Koresh died two decades ago in a fiery blaze, but what of the disciples he left behind? *Emirates Man* meets two men still awaiting the apocalypse



Smoking fire consumes the Branch Davidian Compound during the FBI assault to end the 51-day standoff with cult leader David Koresh and his followers

**A** while back we had a little bit of snow here in Nottingham. It was chaos. I mean, can you imagine when the Earth ends? Wow, come on. [Bible passage] Matthew 24 talks about people's hearts failing them through seeing the things coming up on the Earth, so you're going to see millions and millions of people die – the level of destruction is going to be such that you'll just let go on life. When these events begin to happen, can you imagine the kind of state humanity's going to be in?"

Livingstone Fagan, a 55-year-old British man born in Jamaica, is discussing the end of days. It's a topic he claims to not merely know a lot about, but something he admits to be actively looking forward to, as he will be granted eternal life in God's Kingdom and free of his temporal existence on Earth. At least that's what he believes will happen. The trouble is, Fagan has been patiently waiting for Armageddon for some 21 years now, and at the time of writing it seems no closer to happening. And yet, for

his part, Fagan is adamant the rapture is fast approaching. "Well, at this moment it could be any time," he tells me, in a remarkably muddled accent – an amalgamation of American, Jamaican and English tones. "We were never told a date, but we were told that there would be certain events taking place, and everything is in place right now. You're going to see him."

The "we" Livingstone refers to is the Seventh-day Adventist offshoot – the Branch Davidians; while "he" (or rather "He") is God. However, the Lord Livingstone Fagan speaks of is not quite the Christ you'd know from Biblical times, instead it is Vernon Wayne Howell – more commonly known as David Koresh – a self-proclaimed messiah, and former leader of the Branch Davidian sect.

To his devout followers, David Koresh was a reincarnation of Christ on Earth, sent to explain The Bible before an impending apocalypse. Whereas to many others during the early 1990s, David Koresh was a false prophet, a gun-toting paedophile, a power-hungry conman whose religious brainwashing led to the deaths of 76 people, as well as his own, in a fiery inferno. Among those cremated alive were 23 children.

What started as a dispute over the correct taxation of guns between the Bureau Of Alcohol, Tobacco and

Firearms (ATF) and Koresh in Waco – a sleepy, God-fearing Texan town deep within America's Bible belt – swiftly descended into a full-scale holy war between Koresh's Branch Davidians and the FBI, in a 51-day armed standoff. At Mount Carmel, the religious compound nicknamed 'Ranch Apocalypse' by David Koresh, the infamous leader had over 100 devoted live-in followers armed with countless weapons and primed to battle the state as was, according to Koresh, foretold by prophecy. Such was their commitment to their leader that all members annulled their marriages as a symbol of faith, with only Koresh allowed to wed and have sex. 'Marrying' up to 20 women, Koresh sought to father the 24 elders that would judge humanity upon doomsday. He got as far as 12 children before his death, the youngest of his harem of wives believed to be as young as 12 years old.

Years later, and the 51-day siege still holds the unfortunate title of the longest and bloodiest standoff in American history. Controversy rages on who's to blame, which side shot first, who started the climactic fire, whether it was murder by government or mass religious suicide, and precisely why tanks, armed FBI agents and tear gas were deployed to save women and children from a man they quite simply did not want to be rescued from. It's enough to script a Hollywood blockbuster, and for Manchester resident Derek Lovelock, the plot is all too real.

"I thought death was imminent. I thought, 'I'm going to die in here,'" says the 59-year-old, who was inside the chapel at the religious group's Mount Carmel home on April 19, 1993, as flames engulfed the compound after seven weeks of deadlocked negotiations saw an FBI plan to use tear gas to drive them out turned sour.

"This smoke's billowing out and the fire's raging, getting hotter and hotter. It was so hot in there that it melted kitchen appliances. I'm stood there, transfixed, thinking what do I do? Do I stay in here and die, or do I run out there and I could be shot?"

Three years previously, Derek Lovelock had found himself in Waco not in search of a drama, but spiritual truth. He'd heard about an enigmatic preacher called David Koresh through his Seventh-day Adventist church in North West England, and was keen to find out first hand what all the fuss was about.

"The first time I met him, he stood a few yards away from me and it was like he knew everything about me," says Lovelock of Koresh, a former guitarist turned holy man who claimed to have the power of prophecy after be-

ing "visited" by an angel during a trip to the Middle East. "We believe that God was speaking through him. When David spoke, it wasn't David really that was speaking to us, it was God speaking to us through David. It's what's called the spirit of prophecy."

Two years passed before Lovelock returned to the United States, but this time it was to live at Mount Carmel alongside more than 100 believers, more than 30 of which British citizens, to learn religious scripture and Koresh's message, centred around the destruction of the Earth and rise of God's kingdom – as described in the Book Of Revelation.

But despite the oft-stated perception of the Branch Davidians as crazed religious weirdos, Lovelock claims living at Mount Carmel was a spiritual, peaceful experience.

"David Koresh was not a cult leader," says Lovelock, "he was a Bible teacher.

"Everyday life was a very nice place to be. It was out in the countryside away from the city. We had no distractions, we had a healthy diet, and David Koresh would point to moral values that no one would consider. It was that kind of life."

Back in the present, and Derek Lovelock's life is unrecognisable from the perceived serenity of Mount Carmel. After suffering second-degree burns fleeing the flames as his former home turned to ash, Lovelock was held without charge by US authorities for seven months as a material witness, before being deported back to England so he could attend his late father's funeral. He missed it by two days.

Surviving on state benefits in a one-bedroom flat in Manchester, Lovelock says the trauma of his experiences has rendered him incapable of work. Once dependent on anti-depressants, he claims anxiety attacks are hopefully a thing of the past, as he's "learned to live with the experience" of Waco.

Aside from filling his days with "everyday mundane things" such as washing and eating, Lovelock remains an ardent believer of David Koresh. His life now, he says, is a waiting game, as Lovelock too eagerly awaits the end of the world. And



David Koresh, his wife Rachel, and their son Cyrus in front of their house, April 1986



Livingston Fagan is escorted into the federal courthouse on March 24, 1993 for an initial hearing after leaving the group's compound the previous morning.



**THE DAVIDIAN SECT RANCH IN WACO**

A FBI agent looking into the bunker that survived the blaze that levelled the rest of the Branch Davidian compound.



just like Livingstone Fagan, Derek Lovelock claims that end times are imminent.

“It’s definitely getting close,” assures Lovelock. “It’s not like I can put a direct number on it and say it’s going to be next week or next year, but it’s soon. It’s no secret rapture, everyone’s going to know about it.”

Lovelock says world events such as the global economic crisis and war in the Middle East are all inter-linked, contributing to the opening of the ‘Seven Seals’, as stated in the Book Of Revelation. The result of this shall be widespread catastrophe across the globe, before the righteous are welcomed into God’s kingdom and granted eternal life.

“It’s going to be a perfect world,” says Lovelock proudly. “No death, no terror, no sickness, no sadness. Whatever position you are in heaven, you’ll be happy.” As for the sinners, among them the FBI and ATF forces that Lovelock believes murdered his 76 Branch Davidian cohorts, it’ll be Armageddon.

“They said, ‘We’ll see you in court,’ but one day they’re going to have to face the biggest court, and that’s God.”

**T**oday, the modern face of the Branch Davidian sect is somewhat schizophrenic. Within the cluster of survivors from the Mount Carmel siege, some still consider themselves ‘Koreshian’, while others have denounced their faith entirely. If you visit the group’s former home in Waco you’ll find a new church, a shrine to the departed, a fresh (if small) community of Branch Davidians known as ‘Branch, The Lord Out Righteousness’, even a new leader. Though the respective factions share differing views on whether David Koresh was Christ or conman, what binds them is their shared belief of an impending day of reckoning.

Back in the UK, Livingstone Fagan considers himself the official mouthpiece for the survivors. He believes it to be his duty to be spokesman for what the Davidians argue is “the truth” of the initial ATF raid and gun battle of February 28, 1993, whereby four ATF agents and six Branch Davidians lost their lives. If not, he argues, why else would he still be here?

Once a social worker with a master’s degree in theology, Fagan left Mount Carmel 24 days into the siege as part of the ongoing FBI negotiations with David Koresh that saw 35 people released. But instead of being the integral cog in negotiations be-



President Clinton and US attorney general Janet Reno

tween the two camps as he’d thought, Fagan was promptly taken to police custody, forced to watch the April 19 events unfold on a prison cell television, as his wife, mother and 74 others burned alive inside Mount Carmel.

In the years following the siege, Fagan has endured a turbulent existence. He was among five Davidian survivors acquitted of murder in the Waco aftermath, yet still handed a 40-year prison sentence for voluntary manslaughter. “That’s justice for you,” he laughs, bleakly.

## WACO’S KEY FIGURES

The people at the heart of the United States’ longest and deadliest standoff

### DAVID KORESH

Born Vernon Wayne Howell in Houston, Texas, in 1959 to a 14-year-old single mother, Koresh never knew his father.

He endured a difficult childhood, was teased and nicknamed ‘Mr Retardo’ at school for his dyslexia, before dropping out in the ninth grade. After embarking on an unsuccessful attempt to become a rock star in Hollywood, he joined the Branch Davidians in 1981, taking over as leader in 1990 and legally changing his name to David Koresh – in honour of two Biblical kings. After breaking several promises made to the FBI of leading his followers from Mount Carmel during the 51-day siege, Koresh died in the resulting fire, later identified in the ashes with the cause of

death confirmed as a single gunshot wound to the head. Koresh was later buried in an unmarked grave in a Texas cemetery.

### STEVE SCHNEIDER

David Koresh’s right-hand man, Schneider was chief of communications to the FBI negotiation team during the standoff. Schneider’s wife Judy was among Koresh’s 20 ‘wives’, having a child with the Branch Davidian leader, the baby Schneider had never been able to give her. Steve Schneider was found dead alongside David Koresh, with a gunshot wound to the mouth. Some believe their deaths were suicide, others allege Schneider turned on and executed his leader.

### JANET RENO

Janet Reno became USA’s first female attorney general in March 1993 with the siege already under way, but it was Reno who approved the FBI’s plan to introduce tear gas on April 19 in the hope of forcing the Branch Davidians from their compound. “We will never know whether there was a better solution,” Reno said to a committee two years later, after the tear gas plan failed and 76 men, women and children died in the eventual fire.

### BILL CLINTON

Scarcely a month into his presidency when the botched ATF raid happened on February 28, 1993, Clinton was said to have kept updated with developments throughout the siege. Though he maintains the

tear gas decision was that of Janet Reno, Clinton admitted years later Waco was one of the failures of his presidency.

### THE CHILDREN

Said to be “the only true innocents” of Waco by FBI negotiator Byron Sage, none of the 21 children released during the siege are known to follow the Branch Davidian faith today. These include Neharah and Renae Fagan of Nottingham, Londoner Natalie Nobrega as well as David Koresh’s surviving children, Sky and Scooter Okimoto, who live in Hawaii.

### TIMOTHY MCVEIGH

Known as the Oklahoma City Bomber, McVeigh added a footnote to Waco’s sad history by detonating a truck bomb outside a federal building on the second anniversary of the siege’s conclusion, killing 168 and injuring over 500. A Gulf War veteran, McVeigh visited Mount Carmel twice and declared his actions revenge against the government’s conduct in Waco. He was executed by lethal injection in 2001.



Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh sits for an interview with Rob Night (left) and Stephen Jones while in prison, June 23, 1995

But unlike his fellow Davidians, Fagan did not appeal the court’s decision, nor did he “play the game” of the US prison system, which led to seven of his 14 years incarcerated spent in solitary confinement, and being moved regularly between prisons. “Diesel therapy, in prison speak,” says Fagan.

Fagan claims he was routinely beaten and tormented by guards, and would have been granted a pardon and early release had he signed a disclaimer admitting partial guilt in the Waco case. He declined, but once the appeal of the other Branch Davidian prisoners was successful in the Supreme Court, the judge decided to let Fagan go anyway.

Residing in Nottingham since his release and deportation from the United States in 2007, Fagan lives in a one-bedroom flat, leading something of a nomadic lifestyle. No television – he claims he’s never owned nor wanted one, no internet – visiting the local library should he need to go online, and only owning a mobile phone “out of necessity” – to facilitate interview requests such as this one. Suffice to say you won’t find Livingstone Fagan on any social media sites – he compares the handover of such information to first being booked into prison in America. Upon leaving, Fagan admits he was shocked

by the technological world he found waiting for him. “I’d been locked away for so long a time,” says Fagan, “so it took a little while readjusting to the changes that had occurred here in England. I mean, I remember back in 1993 we didn’t have mobile phones. Well, we did, we had those things that were the size of a brick.”

Fagan is currently unemployed, his role at a local not-for-profit organisation terminated following an interview he did with the BBC. He exists on Jobseeker’s Allowance and lives alone, believing that “it’s a little bit difficult to engage in that level of intimacy at this stage, there’s too much going on”. Acquaintances are mostly limited to Waco alumni, family and former colleagues, yet it’s worth noting Fagan has two children – both of whom lived with him at Mount Carmel and were also released before the fire. Much like the other children freed during the Waco siege, however, they do not follow their father’s faith.

“Well, they never were [Branch Davidians],” admits Fagan. “My son was four, my daughter was seven in 1993 in Waco.” Fagan’s daughter Renae has a degree and is now married, and his son Neharah is a bar manager, so



View of the church, Branch Davidian, Waco, June 2012



The names of lives lost during the massacre

it is unlikely they’ll ever devote their lives to religion like their father. So what of their fate on Judgement Day?

“They’re above 18, they know their freedom,” says Fagan, bluntly. “So they’ve experienced [the religion], it’s not that they can say they were denied it.”

**F**or Derek Lovelock and Livingstone Fagan, they are merely treading water counting down the minutes of clock before they’re fast-tracked to paradise to re-join David Koresh and their brothers and sisters who perished at Mount Carmel. It’s for this reason that Fagan has not once shed a tear to mourn his mother and wife’s passing in the Waco flames.

“I understand they only rest right now, there is to be a resurrection. This is not a theory to us, this is a reality.”

As for a return to their former home in Waco goes, both Fagan and Lovelock are currently banned from entering the United States, though, according to them, this does not mean a reunion is off the table after doomsday.

“Oh we’re definitely going to go back to America, but that America is going to be much changed from what it is now – especially when the kingdom comes,” says Fagan. “The current rulership of the Earth will be removed. I’ll be able to go back, though it probably won’t be called the United States then, it will be different to how it is now.”

Fagan pauses, turning his attention to the fate of non-believers, and by association, myself. “By telling you ahead of time when the event occurs you will now know what it is,” he snickers. “You won’t interpret it as the Earth being invaded by aliens, right?”

