

"This is the end my friend, the end" was a popular lyric of Jim Morrison and "The Doors" over five decades ago. Apocalypticism is the air we breathe in our culture today especially when politics go bad and it seems every sci-fi movie presents a dystopian future where either the government, aliens, A.I. machines, meteors, devils, or viruses want only to eradicate humanity from the face of the earth.

I was first introduced to the idea of "The End" as a little lad. Our church rented a Christian movie, "A Thief in the Night" which was about this strange thing called the rapture. And then, as they were made available, the sequels, "A Distant Thunder," and "The Image of the Beast." This was in the decade of the 70s when movies such as "The Omen," "The Exorcist" and "Rosemary's Baby" were scaring the "H.E. double hockey sticks" out of everyone. To this day, I never fully watched any of them, but just the thought of them keeps me up at night balled up in the fetal position.

The Church has had its share of well-meaning "prophets" that have likewise predicted the end. Perhaps the most famous was William Miller who began the "Millerite" movement in the early 1800s. In 1831, he predicted that Christ would return in 1843. When Jesus didn't get the memo, Miller changed it to 1844. When Jesus again failed to show up, Henry Emmons, one of Miller's closet followers wrote,

*"I waited all Tuesday, and dear Jesus did not come ...  
I lay prostrate for 2 days... sick with disappointment."*

Harold Camping prophesied the coming of Christ on 12 different occasions, the last in 1994. Why 1994? Because it was a full 7000 years after Noah's Flood. However, the Church is not alone in its prognostications of the end. Non-religious folks have been busy predicting a terminal point as well. Who remembers the Mayan prophecy of 2012? Or Haley's Comet, which was supposed to destroy the world in 1910 and finish the job 76 years later in 1986? Or perhaps the latest, greatest scare called Y2K?

Now if you are brave enough or curious enough, you can always do an "End Times" search on Google or You Tube. If you do, get ready to be mesmerized by some of the wackiest and wildest, craziest and zaniest, theories, conspiracies, and machinations imaginable. Your head will spin, probably faster than Regan's did in the "Exorcist."

Now I don't recommend getting your "End Time" insights from popular culture. There's a much better place and that place is the Bible, which has very much to say on this subject. As we continue our year-long series on "Major Topics of the Bible" let's begin to probe this massive subject.

## The 2nd Coming of Christ

The Bible is clear that human/earthly history does have an endgame. This endgame is the 2nd Coming of Christ, a.k.a. the “Blessed Hope of the Church” or the “Consummation.” Jesus was, is, and always will be, the Rock Star of history and his return is the very center of it all. His 2nd coming is spoken about in the two most famous creeds of the Church. Listen to an excerpt from the Apostle’s Creed. After detailing Jesus’ redemptive accomplishments on earth, it says:

*He ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.*

The Nicene Creed similarly adds:

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

History then, is not circular and repeating, as some suggest, but it is like an arrow shot out of a bow towards a target. That target is Jesus’ return. His projected coming, however, was not a fever dream of his followers, manufactured by his disciples, or speculated on by theologians. It was explicitly and implicitly (parables) taught by Jesus himself in places like Matthew 25:31 and Luke 18:8. Calling himself by his favorite nickname he says:

*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.*

When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Other biblical writers have promised his return as well, most extensively Paul in I Thessalonians 4:16:

*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God.*

And Peter in 2 Peter 3:10

*The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.*

And Jude (1:14):

*See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones.*

The OT writers constantly referred to the last day of history as the “Day of the Lord.” Nevertheless, the greatest, “I’ll Be Back” in history did not come from this guy but from this one:

When?

Biblically speaking, we are in the endgame right now and have been for the past 2000 years. Jesus' resurrection and Holy Spirit birthed Church at Pentecost began the official countdown of history. Since the end-time clock is ticking, we would do well to live out Peter's advice in 1 Peter 4:7-8 :

*7 The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. 8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

Praying hard and loving deeply sounds like a good way to go about life generally but is especially necessary to survive, and even thrive, spiritually in these end times. However, when I ask people, "What is your most urgent question regarding the end times?" I usually hear three inextricably and interrelated "When Questions":

**When will Jesus Return? When will the Rapture Occur? When Is the GT?**

Conclusion:

Answering the "Whens"

Now for those who need to brush up on their eschatology, (last things) the "Rapture" is the phenomenon of when the Church is "caught up to meet the Lord in the air" at some point in the endgame (I Thessalonians 4:17). The "Great Tribulation" takes place towards the end of the endgame and will certainly be a time like no other in history. Since we will be studying these two events more closely in the coming weeks, I will hold off on my answer as to when they will occur until then.

Regarding Jesus' return. Before I give an answer, I want you to trust that I've been studying this topic for the better part of my adult life, both academically and personally. However, I also want to warn you that my conclusion will not be conventional, but contrarian, perhaps to anything you may have heard before. Nevertheless, after analyzing this "mother of all 'when' questions," from every possible angle, position, and perspective, I am 1000% convinced with absolutely certainty and unwavering confidence that I am correct. When I discovered the answer a few years ago, I asked myself, "How did no one in the 2000 years of church reach such a simple and clear conclusion?" But then I remembered the sheer brilliance and mental acuity the Good Lord, out of his infinite wisdom, has bestowed upon me and how remarkably blessed you are to have me as your pastor (lol).

Thus, my answer regarding Jesus' return is, "Come back next week to find out!"