

No end in sight to end-of-times predictions

By The Rev. Paul Viggiano

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Having just finished the last bag of powdered scrambled eggs I purchased in preparation for Y2K, I am not quite ready for the world to come to an end ... again.

No such luck! Apparently my biggest problem during the winter solstice of 2012 is not going to be the Christmas present I have yet to purchase for my wife. The Mayan calendar will be coming to an end which, of course, means the world will be destroyed.

Well, maybe not destroyed.

The highly advanced Mayan civilization, which flourished from A.D. 300 to 900, pinpoints Dec. 12, 2012 as the end of a 5,126-year era that may trigger either a restoration to true balance of the divine masculine and feminine (where we all must take advantage of the love and patience of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi), or a change in the nature of consciousness (which already happened for me in the sixties), or for the sake of Hollywood, widespread catastrophe.

Also contained in the predictions are: humanity going beyond technology as we know it; the end of time and money; the entering of a fifth dimension; galactic synchronization between the Earth and the rest of the universe; the upgrading of our DNA and Gilligan's Island making a comeback on HBO. As a Christian pastor and apologist, it's about here that my glass house must be showing.

Christian "prophets" have been predicting the end of the world for almost 2,000 years. Donatus and Novatian gathered followings with their "end-times" predictions in the third and fourth centuries. When the Visigoths sacked Rome (A.D. 410), it was ignition for the end. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory postulated that the "signs described by our Lord as presaging the end of the world" were "already accomplished." The list goes on.

Author Richard Erdoes observes that as the year 999 approached, "the old Basilica of St. Peter's at Rome was thronged with a mass of weeping and trembling worshipers awaiting the end of the world." The birth of the Inquisition (1209-1244) led many to conclude they were in the vicinity of the Second Coming. The Black Death (1347-1350) did the same.

Christian prognostications regarding the end of days have dominated religious literature my entire life.

"The Late Great Planet Earth," written by Hal Lindsey in 1970, put us all on call to the political convergence signaling the termination of humanity. It was the best-selling book in the nation. The "Left Behind" book series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins has captivated religious audiences in the tens of millions. Yet life goes on, and still my biggest problem is the Christmas present I have failed to purchase in a timely manner.

Suffice it to say, it is my conviction that popular Christian apocalyptic literature is forged from poor Bible interpretation. The great scholars in the history of Christendom have not drawn the same biblical conclusions as modern paperback Christian novelists. Now, as America moves away from Christian convictions, we have a new eschatological (end times) sheriff in town - the Mayans. My advice: Don't quit brushing your teeth or empty your IRAs in anticipation of the end of the world.

In one respect it is good to live each day as if it's your last. Don't leave conflicts unresolved. Stop to appreciate the beauty of simple things. Kiss your wife or husband before you leave for work. Watch or listen to your children when they want to show you their latest dance, trick or song. Do some karaoke, go dancing, laugh.

At the same time, plan for the long haul. I think the Bible teaches that a lot of good will happen on this earth before the days are over. The gates of Hades will not prevail against the kingdom of God. Eat well, exercise, prepare for the future financially, physically and spiritually. Read good books. Read the Bible. Teach your children to be wise and thoughtful. As a Christian it is my conviction that the only genuine method of spiritual preparation comes by faith in Christ as the savior of souls. Someday there will be an end. But one needn't fear the near or distant future when clothed in Christ, the one who holds the keys to it all.

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