

The Danger of an Exaggerated End-Time Mentality

On a regular basis, whenever there are reports of moral collapse in our country or of wars and crises worldwide, someone will say to me, “This is it! Jesus is about to return! Everything is coming down!”

Of course, according to one system of interpretation, that could be true and the Lord could return within the next few moments or years.

The problem I have is that I’ve heard Jesus is coming back any moment for more than 40 years.

Could it be that we have a wrong mentality about the end of the age? Could it be that we’re missing something very important?

To be clear, I am not a preterist (meaning, that I don’t believe most of the prophetic promises and events have already been fulfilled and that “the coming of Jesus” took place in the year 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed), and I do look forward to the return of the Lord and our eternal union with Him (see 1 Cor. 15:50-55; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 John 2:28-3:3).

And I am a classic premillennialist as opposed to a postmillennialist or amillennialist, although I am not a dispensational premillennialist—meaning I do not believe in a pre-trib rapture.

But the last thing I want to do is argue over these points, and I have worked with leaders around the world for decades without dividing over these issues. If you want to agree with me passionately or disagree with me passionately over eschatological details, have at it.

What I want to address here is a potentially dangerous mentality that breeds despair and hopelessness, that leads to capitulation and escapism, and that almost encourages believers to throw in the towel.

For example, in response to one of my articles about sex-change regret, someone commented, "More proof that the end is near. Right is wrong and wrong is right."

Someone else responded to my YouTube video on the apostasy of the PCUSA by saying, "The end is over the near and more churches committing apostasy, it's ridiculous," while someone else wrote on Facebook, "We are witnessing the great falling away."

My problem, to repeat, is that I've heard this since I came to faith in late 1971, a time when the most influential, best-selling Christian book was Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth*.

And while I have not held to a pre-trib rapture theology for more than 35 years, I appreciate the fact that my dispensationalist, pre-trib friends take the Bible seriously, that many of them have been great evangelists, that they recognize the importance of Israel today and that they really are looking forward to the return of Jesus (whereas lots of other believers hardly give it any thought).

But to say it again, I've heard that Jesus was coming back any second for more than 40 years, and every time something bad happens people are saying, "Armageddon is next!" or, "This is the final deception!"

What we do know is that so far, the end has not yet come, the harvest is still very ripe (and vast), there have been far worse times in human history than today (in recent memory, just think of World War II and the massive losses of life), and around the world the Spirit is being poured out mightily.

It is true that America today is in great moral and spiritual decline, but revival historians will tell you that we have had some very dark times before, and it was divine visitation that turned things around.

Where is it written that there will not be another, even greater awakening? Can you demonstrate to me conclusively from the Scriptures that God is finished with our nation and that no hope for revival remains?

It's interesting to note that over the centuries, even as early as the second century, Christian leaders were proclaiming that they were living in the last generation (or close to it), and so it's understandable that believers through the ages would have this perspective.

After all, we see the great suffering and sin of the human race, and if we love the Lord, we will live with at least some sense of urgency: there are so many lost, hurting people to reach and we have only one lifetime to touch them with the good news.

And all of us should long for the Lord's appearing (see 2 Tim. 4:8). In fact, if we're so at home in this world that we don't long for His coming, we need to examine our hearts.

But to repeat once more, the problem is with our mentality, with the idea that, every time there's an example of apostasy we say, "This is the great falling away!", or every time we see further moral collapse in our society, we say, "We're out of here any minute!"

Many believers had that attitude in the '60s and '70s, and rather than recognize that a great potential harvest was here, they thought, "The whole world is going mad!" And rather than stand against the flood tide of immorality that swept through our culture, all too many believers were waiting to be taken out, leaving it to the ungodly to write their revolution into law. We have been paying the price ever since.

As I understand it, the Scriptures indicate that the last days began with the death and resurrection of Jesus and will continue until the end of this age (see, for example, Acts 2:17-20; 2 Tim. 3:1-6; 1 John 2:18).

This means that we have been living in a transition age for almost 2,000 years, a time of already but not yet, a time when the kingdom of God has broken in and is expanding but will not reach its complete manifestation until Jesus returns, a time of great outpouring and a time of great falling away, in short, a time of parallel extremes.

And I expect those extremes to get more and more extreme the closer we get to the end. (Again, I'm quite aware of the different interpretations that can be put on these passages, so I'll say it again: I'm not here to divide over theology or to debate interpretations. I'm here to make a practical point.)

So I encourage you to remember that we are in the age of the Spirit's outpouring, the age of the harvest, that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to the Lord Jesus, that we are overcomers and more than conquerors in Him, that He who lives within us is greater than he who lives in the world, that our God sits enthroned in the heavens, and that, in the end, His ways will triumph over the entire earth.

That's why, no matter how bleak things look, my eyes are fixed on the Lord, and in Him, I am full of hope, confidence and vision. And should the day come when our strategy needs to change, I trust that our heavenly Commander in Chief will make that plain.

So, forward until He comes!

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