

WHEN IN THE WORLD WILL JESUS RETURN?

The Follies and Perils of Date-Setting

by J. Greg Sheryl



At least since the time that the disciples asked the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Olives, “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3), people have been trying to pinpoint the exact time of Christ’s return and/or the end of the world.

The Scriptures promise that Jesus will return to the earth, even within the same section of Scripture above (Matthew 24-25) where He responds to the questions posed by his disciples about future events. (See Matthew 24:27-25:13, 25:31-46, Mark 13:24-37, Luke 21:27, Acts 1:11, 3:20-21, 1 Corinthians 1:7-8, 4:5, 11:26, 16:22, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, Hebrews 9:28, and the book of Revelation.) The Scriptures also testify that the present heavens and earth will come to an end (Hebrews 1:10-12, 2 Peter 3:7, 10-13, Revelation 21:1).

The Scriptures say of the original disciples of Jesus:

“... while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so

come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:9-11).

So, while Jesus was ascending into heaven, two angels assured the disciples that “this same Jesus” would return to them. And, just as they had watched Him disappear in a cloud, Jesus will also return with the clouds (Matthew 24:30, Mark 14:62, Revelation 1:7).

The phrase “Second Coming,” as used in this article, refers to the return of the Lord Jesus *to the earth*. Some evangelicals believe that the rapture of the Church (the catching up of Christ’s people to meet Him in the air — see description below) occurs at a specific time such as 7 years or 3½ years *prior to* the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus *to the earth*, whereas, others believe that the rapture and the Second Coming occur more or less simultaneously. The phrase, “the Second Coming” may possibly derive from the Scripture that says:

“To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHRIST’S RETURN TO OTHER FUTURE EVENTS

Throughout Church history, sincere, godly, orthodox Christians have inter-

preted the prophecies of Scripture concerning the return of Christ in various ways as it relates to future events, such as the appearance of the Antichrist, the Tribulation, the Great Tribulation, the millennium, and the rapture. A brief description of some of these terms follows.

The Antichrist. An extremely wicked man, in league with Satan, who opposes God and His people. The second-century B.C. Syrian ruler, Antiochus IV, who called himself “Epiphanes” (Epiphanes means “god manifest”), and who persecuted the Jews, is thought by some to be a pre-figuring of the end-times Antichrist.

The actual term “antichrist(s)” is only used five times in the Bible; and then only in the books of 1 and 2 John (1 John 2:18 [twice], 2:22, 4:3, 2 John 7). Although these are the only specific references to the Antichrist (or antichrists) in the Bible, a number of other passages (particularly in Revelation) are thought to refer to him (e.g., “the man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and the “beast” of Revelation 13).

In Revelation, he appears to be one member of a “trinity of evil,” as it were, consisting of the devil, the Antichrist, and the false prophet (see Revelation 12:9, 13:1-18, 16:13-14, 19:20, 20:10).

The Tribulation/The Great Tribulation. The Lord Jesus told his disciples, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Likewise, Paul and Barnabas told the early Christians, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Tribulation is a normal part of life for those who follow Jesus.

However, there is a period of time described in the Bible that might be called "Tribulation with a capital T." Some use this term synonymously with the biblical phrase "the Great Tribulation." Others, however, believe that "the Great Tribulation" only describes the latter half of "the Tribulation" period. Theology professor Dr. Robert Lightner explains the use of these two terms:

"[The] *Great Tribulation* — Refers to the future seven-year period of unprecedented trouble, also called Daniel's seventieth week [a reference to Daniel 9:24-27]. Some apply this term to the last half of the 'week.'"¹

Lightner also observes:

"... with regard to the future seven-year Tribulation, some evangelicals do not believe there is a future seven-year Tribulation at all. For them the Tribulation is now."²

The *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times* says:

"The phrase 'Great Tribulation' ([Greek] *thlipsis megas*) only occurs four times in the New Testament: Matthew 24:21; Acts 7:11; Revelation 2:22 and 7:14."³

For those evangelicals who believe that the Bible teaches a future tribulation period, it appears that only two of the above four Scripture references — Matthew 24:21 and Revelation 7:14 — could be references to such an event. Concerning the former passage, the same source states:

"In summary, the 'great distress' [i.e., 'Great Tribulation'] of Mat-

thew 24:21 refers to a period of intense tribulation and persecution at the end of the age just prior to Jesus' return."⁴

The Millennium. The Millennium refers to a 1,000-year period most clearly mentioned in Revelation 20:1-7, when Christ with certain Christian martyrs (who are a part of the first resurrection) will reign.

Although Revelation 20:1-7 speaks clearly and specifically about this event, there are other prophecies of Scripture, even within the Old Testament, that some take to allude to this future golden age. Additionally, some evangelical Christians believe that the Millennium does not take place in the future, but that we are currently living in the Millennium.

The Rapture. The rapture is a word referring to the "catching up" of both dead and living Christians to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air. The primary Scriptural text for this event is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. (Some also see John 14:3 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 as referring to it.) One source notes:

"In verse 17 the English phrase 'caught up' translates the Greek word *harpazo*, which means 'to seize upon with force' or 'to snatch up.' This word is used 14 times in the Greek New Testament in a variety of ways."⁵

Critics of this doctrine are fond of pointing out that the word "rapture" isn't even found in the 1 Thessalonians 4 passage. It is true that the English word "rapture" isn't found there; however, Bible prophecy authors Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy have noted and responded to this charge:

"Some critics have noted that the word *rapture* is never used in the Bible. While this is true of English versions [of the Bible], Latin translators of the Greek New Testament *did* use the word *rapere*, which is the root of the English term *rapture*. Throughout much of the history of the West-

ern church, Latin was the accepted language of theological discussion. As a result, many theological terms developed out of this language (i.e., Trinity). Our current term *rapture* is also such a term."⁶

Just because a word or a phrase doesn't occur in the Bible or an English translation of the Bible, doesn't mean that the word or phrase may not express a biblical truth or concept. Other examples of words or phrases that express biblical concepts which are not found in English translations of the Bible include: the Trinity, theocracy, and the phrases "the prodigal son," "the good Samaritan," and so forth.

THREE MAJOR ORTHODOX VIEWS REGARDING JESUS' RETURN

Lightner, who has taught courses in both theology and biblical studies for approximately 50 years, summarizes three *major* orthodox, evangelical views concerning the relationship between some of the terms mentioned above with the return of our Lord:

"There are three major belief systems regarding God's program for the future. Equally dedicated, sincere, and godly men have contended for these. *Premillennialism* is the view that Christ will return and institute a kingdom of perfect peace and righteousness on earth that will last for one thousand years [i.e., the Millennium]. After this reign of true peace, eternity begins. *Amillennialism* is the view that when Christ returns, eternity begins with no prior thousand-year (millennial) reign on earth. The *postmillennial* view (though out of favor for some time, is again gaining popularity) has it that through the church's influence the world will be Christianized before Christ returns. Immediately following His return, eternity begins. ... Whatever else may be said of these views, one thing is sure: They cannot all be right.

The views cancel out each other.”⁷

Lightner further states:

“Wrongly, the three views of the future defined above have often been set forth as primarily the result of one’s interpretation of the references to the ‘thousand years’ in Revelation 20:1-7. This is far too simplistic an answer. Instead of one’s interpretation of this phrase determining his millennial view, it is really the other way around. One’s millennial system arrived at on other biblical grounds determines how Revelation 20:1-7 will be interpreted.”⁸

There are also different versions and flavors within these three major views — for example, pretribulational premillennialism, posttribulational premillennialism, Augustinian amillennialism, etc. — which Lightner details in the chapters he devotes to each of these three major views regarding future events surrounding Christ’s return. Elsewhere in his book, he notes, “It may be hard for some to admit but it is still true: no particular scheme of end-time events is without its problems.”⁹ To this he says:

“He will return! Evangelicals agree fully on that. On the question of what specifics will be associated with His return and what the exact order of events will be, and the sequence of time in which they will come to pass, however, there is very little agreement.”¹⁰

He also notes:

“The fact is that soon after the apostles passed from the earthly scene, differences developed over end times [understandings]. The battle has raged among evangelicals at least since the third century [A.D.]”¹¹

Although, as Lightner makes clear in this book, Christians may war in unchristian ways over their different understandings of the events preced-

ing, following, and occurring simultaneously with Christ’s return, it is another facet regarding the return of Christ with which we are here concerned.

A CLEAR WARNING FROM THE LORD JESUS

Whereas the Lord has not prohibited Christians from having different understandings over the relationship of various end-time events to the Second Coming of Jesus; or even to speculate over various understandings of the millennium, the Tribulation, or the identity of the Antichrist; the Lord *has* clearly told us that we do not (indeed, we *cannot*) know the time of His return to the earth.

In Matthew 24-25, a passage known as the Olivet Discourse, Jesus gives several clear, plain statements regarding our ability to know the time of His return. He said:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone” (Matthew 24:36, NASB, cf. Mark 13:32).

Likewise He said:

“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42).

“Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him” (Matthew 24:44).

“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (Matthew 25:13).

In these passages, the Lord clearly tells His disciples that no one, not even the angels in heaven, nor even Jesus Himself (at least, while He was on earth) knew when He would return. He states that only the Father possesses that knowledge. Because they don’t know when He will return — a fact Jesus states several times in the Scriptures quoted above — they must constantly watch for His return and be ready for it.

Similarly, in Mark’s Gospel, He says:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ... Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning — lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” (Mark 13:32-33, 35-37).

Here again, the Lord Jesus says that only the Father knows when He (i.e., Jesus) will return. He tells the disciples that they don’t know when He is coming back. As a result, they are to continually watch for His coming.

And in the book of Acts, just prior to His ascension, the disciples asked the Lord:

“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts. 1:6).

Jesus replies:

“And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority’” (Acts 1:7).

In a plain statement of fact, Jesus here tells His disciples not to be concerned with matters sovereignly kept by the Father. Applying this clear statement of our Lord to the matter of the Second Coming of Christ, we again are confronted with the fact that the Father hasn’t granted anyone to know the time of Christ’s return. In unmistakable terms, Jesus told the disciples that only the Father knows this.

Someone has said that where God has put a period, let no man put a question mark. The Scripture itself testifies that:

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us

and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

And the psalmist David testified:

"LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound [or *difficult*] for me" (Psalm 131:1).

BUT WAIT!

Even with the clear teaching of Scriptures such as those cited above, in a letter to supporters fifteen years ago, the president of the Christian Research Institute, Hank Hanegraaff, noted:

"I guess it's just irresistible; some people feel they *have* to decipher the puzzle. I'm talking about the date of Christ's return -- an event that's provoked speculation for nearly two millennia. ... By some accounts, just before AD 1000 many believed the end was near.¹² ... Well, apparently another thousand years of missed predictions and misguided forecasts have not deterred those seeking to 'crack the code.' And it's not just the cults."¹³

In the following several paragraphs, Hanegraaff listed three specific then-current examples of those who had recently been predicting dates for the rapture of the Church and/or the end of the world.

DATE-SETTERS AND DOOMSAYERS

In light of Jesus' teaching, it is hard to believe that anyone would claim to know the date of His return. After all, for someone to claim to know the date of Christ's return essentially means that they are claiming to know more than the angels of God and more than Jesus Himself.

Yet, despite the clear statements from Scripture above about no one except the Father knowing the timing of Christ's return to earth (and, by extension, the end of the world, since

the end of the world won't happen before Christ returns), people throughout history have either cavalierly ignored these statements; or else, perhaps some have simply been unaware of them. A number of such figures can be found in Church history.

Christian end-times researcher and author Richard Kyle notes:

"While apocalyptic millennialism was strong in the early church, on the whole the early church fathers shied away from specific date-setting. ... Most church fathers, however, spoke of Christ's impending but unpredictable coming."¹⁴

In so doing, they were heeding the teachings of Christ regarding His Second Coming. However, Kyle does note exceptions to this general early Church practice: He specifically references Hippolytus (170-236) who predicted a date for Christ's return, and Sextus Julius Africanus (ca. 160-240) who predicted a date for the end.¹⁵

There was an early Church movement that centered, in part, on the belief in an imminent millennium. This was a radically charismatic and ascetic group known as the Montanists, after their founder Montanus (whose ministry began in the mid-to-late second century A.D.). One author notes:

"Montanus, along with followers Prisca and Maximilla, fell into trances and taught that the New Jerusalem was about to descend to an obscure region of Phrygia, now modern day Turkey. Montanus declared himself to be the 'Spirit of Truth,' the personification of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Gospel of John, who was about to reveal all truth.¹⁶ He quickly gathered followers and began to spread what Montanists called 'The Third Testament,' a series of revelatory messages that foretold of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. As word was spread, believers were urged to

come to Phrygia to await the Second Coming."¹⁷

The same author says that in A.D. 431, the Church Council of Ephesus declared Montanus to be a heretic.¹⁸

In the Middle Ages, a division of Franciscans known as "the Spirituals viewed the year 1260 as the beginning of the end."¹⁹ They arrived at this date by studying some of the prophetic teachings of a famous twelfth-century Italian abbot, Joachim of Fiore.

Pastor and conference speaker John A. Williams notes that in A.D. 1526:

"Leaders of the Anabaptists in St. Gallen, Switzerland, excited by events of the day, began running through the streets shouting that the Last Day would arrive in exactly one week. Many were baptized, stopped work, abandoned their homes, and set off into the hills, singing and praying in expectant enthusiasm. After a week had passed with no sign of their returning Lord, they returned to their homes."²⁰

During the reign of the French monarch Louis XIV (1643-1715), there was a group of French Protestants known as the Camisards:

"Among the Camisards a number of prophets arose — most claiming to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and uttering end-time predictions. Best known was Pierre Jurieu, who predicted that the judgment day would come in 1689."²¹

Kyle observes:

"For much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, apocalyptic excitement gripped England. End-time expectations gradually grew until they peaked in the 1640s. ... Talk that doomsday or the millennium would arrive on this day or that became common in England."²²

The large and highly comprehensive book *End Time Visions*, written by

Christian author and investigative reporter Richard Abanes, contains an appendix covering several pages listing numerous Christian and non-Christian sources throughout history that have made end-time predictions.²³ Two of the six chapters of Jason Boyett's irreverent but informative look at the end times, entitled, *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse*, are devoted to enumerating various predictions about the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world throughout human history, again from both Christian and non-Christian sources.²⁴ Some of the dates in Christian history up through the eighteenth century cited by Abanes for the return of Christ and/or the end of the world include 848, 1000, 1033, 1186, 1420, 1524, 1533, 1534, 1656, 1673, 1697, 1716, 1736, and 1792.²⁵ Additional dates predicted for the return of Christ and the end of the world through the eighteenth century given by Boyett include 793, 1583, 1600, 1666, 1694, 1719.²⁶

THE 19TH-21ST CENTURIES

In more modern times, there have been many others who have sought to predict dates for the Second Coming of Jesus and/or the end of the world. We will briefly cover four notable ones in America.

1. William Miller and the Adventist Movement. Church historian Bruce Shelley wrote, "The most famous case [of an end-of-the-world prediction] on American soil ... took place in the northeastern United States just before the Civil War."²⁷

William Miller (1782-1849), who was born in Massachusetts, was reared in a Christian home, but rejected Christianity and became a deist. After serving as a captain in the War of 1812,²⁸ he became a farmer in New York. In 1816, Miller was converted to Christianity. Professor of systematic theology Anthony Hoekema informs:

"During the next two years he studied the Bible intensively with the aid of Cruden's Concordance, but without the help of commen-

taries. In 1818 he wrote down the conclusions to which he had arrived, which ended with this statement: 'I was thus brought, in 1818, at the close of my two-year study of the Scriptures, to the solemn conclusion, that in about twenty-five years from that time [1818] all the affairs of our present state would be wound up.'"²⁹

Hoekema also noted:

"In other words, Miller concluded from his Bible study that the world would come to an end in 1843. Hesitant about publicizing so startling a conclusion, he undertook four more years of Bible study, which confirmed his previous judgment. ... Involved in the 'winding up' of the affairs of the world was, of course, the expected return from heaven of the Lord Jesus Christ. Miller did not at first set an exact date for Christ's return, but affirmed that this event would occur 'about 1843.' Later, however, he specified that this return would take place some time during the Jewish year running from March 21, 1843 to March 21, 1844."³⁰

Miller himself wrote:

"I believe the time can be known by all who desire to understand and to be ready for His coming. And I am fully convinced that some time between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time, Christ will come and bring all His saints with Him; and that then He will reward every man as His work shall be."³¹

Miller seems to have arrived at this date largely based on prophecies from the Old Testament book of Daniel, specifically verses 8:14 and 9:24-27.³² Miller began to make his views public in 1831, and became a Baptist preacher who drew quite a following with his end-time preaching. One researcher has acknowledged, "Num-

bers vary, but Millerism is usually estimated to have ranged from thirty to a hundred thousand."³³ As might be expected, in 1843-1844, crowds grew. However, the fateful year passed without the Lord's return. Miller's reaction seems to have been one of stunned disbelief. He wrote, in part:

"Were I to live my life over again, with the same evidence that I then had, to be honest with God and man I should have to do as I have done. ... I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment; yet I still believe that the Day of the Lord is near, even at the door; and I exhort you, my brethren, to be watchful and not let that day come upon you unawares."³⁴

The late cult expert Walter Martin wrote:

"In the wake of this stunning declaration, the Millerites strove vainly to reconcile their interpretations of the prophetic Scripture with the stark truth that Christ had not returned. With one last gasp, so to speak, Miller reluctantly endorsed ... the belief that Christ would come on October 22, 1844. ... Once again the Millerites' hopes were lifted, and October 22, 1844, became the watchword for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ."³⁵

Kyle describes some of the tragic results:

"Many withdrew from their churches in anticipation of the second advent. They were instructed to get their affairs in order. Many did — selling their property, closing their stores, resigning their jobs, and abandoning their animals and crops."³⁶

When the Lord failed to return on this second announced date, it resulted in what some refer to as "The Great Disappointment." After this, Miller wisely desisted from predicting any future dates for Christ's return.

Through the movement that he had started, however, the Seventh-day Adventist sect eventually resulted, although Miller himself was never a member. In fact, Miller died only five years after this second date failed.

Miller's experience is tragic in that he appears to have been a godly and sincere man. Perhaps he was simply ignorant of the Lord's warnings about no one being able to know the day or hour of His return; although, in view of his study of biblical prophecy, it is difficult to see how this is possible. Nevertheless, William Miller has become an outstanding example of the folly of predicting dates for the Second Coming of Christ. His false predictions resulted in disappointment and disillusionment, both for himself and others, not to mention other tragic results, such as those noted above.

2. Charles Taze Russell and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Russell (1852-1916) was the founder of what was first known as International Bible Students and would later (in 1931) be known as Jehovah's Witnesses.³⁷ Although his parents were Presbyterian, Russell joined the Congregational Church at 13 years of age. However, he was troubled by certain doctrines there, especially the biblical doctrine of eternal hell, which he rejected. By age 17, he had lost his faith in the Bible as being divinely inspired. However, he came into a small meeting of some Adventists (apparently either Seventh-day Adventists, or those who held similar beliefs),³⁸ and reported that his faith in the Bible as divinely inspired was restored.

Christian author Fritz Ridenour says further:

"Another turning point came at the age of 18; he wandered into a church where the second coming of Christ was being discussed.³⁹ He got interested in just when Christ was to come again. To solve the problem, he began to study the Bible. Very soon he published his findings in a pamphlet entitled *The Object and Man-*

ner of the Lord's Return. For centuries, great minds of the church have wrestled with the problem of the Second Coming, but Russell felt that he had solved it in almost no time at all. Russell's pamphlet consists of a lengthy, complicated, and incorrect interpretation of unrelated Scriptures combined with an intricate method of computing time. The end result of his labors was the statement that Jesus Christ would return in 1874. Later, Russell changed the date to 1914. This return was not to be a physical one, but a spiritual one. In other words, when Christ would return, He would not be seen. This of course contradicts Revelation 1:7."⁴⁰

Jehovah's Witnesses followed in Russell's footsteps by continuing to set dates for the Second Coming of Christ, the end-time battle of Armageddon, the end of the world, and so forth. Some of their more notable end-time dates were 1925, the 1940s, and 1975. This is probably the reason one researcher dubbed Jehovah's Witnesses, "Armageddon, Inc."⁴¹

Kyle observed:

"The Jehovah's Witnesses may be the most persistent date-setters in history. Most such groups make one or perhaps two failed predictions. But the Jehovah's Witnesses won't quit. Their leaders have earmarked the years 1874, 1878, 1881, 1910, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975, and 1984 as times of eschatological [i.e., end-times] significance."⁴²

3. Edgar Whisenant and 88 REASONS Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988. Whisenant was a retired NASA engineer who apparently thought he had the necessary talents for figuring out the date of the rapture of the Church. For those Christians who believe that the rapture and the Second Coming of Christ occur simultaneously, Whisenant was guilty of setting a date for Christ's return.

However, even for Christians who believe that the rapture occurs at some point in time prior to the Second Coming of Christ, Whisenant's date-setting is problematic; because, according to this view, the rapture of the Church is a *signless event*, which is imminent — that is, it could occur at any moment.

In 1988, Whisenant published two short booklets bound together opposite one another. One was called *On Borrowed Time*.⁴³ The other was called *88 REASONS Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988*.⁴⁴ He argued that the rapture would occur between September 11-13, 1988, that year's dates for the Jewish feast of Rosh Hashana which is the Jewish New Year.

Investigative reporter Richard Abanes wrote:

"Whisenant had no doubts about his date, stating: 'Only if the Bible is in error am I wrong, and I say that unequivocally. There is no way biblically that I can be wrong; and I say that to every preacher in town.' During one interview he made a declaration that dramatically demonstrated his level of confidence: '[I]f there were a king in this country and I could gamble with my life, I would stake my life on Rosh Hashanah '88.'"⁴⁵

Whisenant is clearly aware of the Lord's words that only the Father knows the time of His return, because he refers to it in his first of 88 reasons. This is what Whisenant wrote in "Reason #1":

"It is evident that, in the minds of most Christians today, Matt. 24:36 is believed to prohibit anyone from being able to see the day of our Lord's return approaching. Matt. 24:36 states that 'No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.' In looking at this statement, you can easily see that it is impossible to know the exact day and hour of the Lord Jesus'

return. ... Also, there are always two days existing on earth at the same time; only at the exact second that the earth passes through the international date line does only one day exist on all the earth. At all other times, there are two days existing on earth at any one moment; one day is coming and the other day is going. So you can see the problem in trying to tell all the Christians covering the earth at any one instant of time the exact day or hour of our Lord's return. *However, this does not preclude or prevent the faithful from knowing the year, the month, and the week of the Lord's return.*"⁴⁶

What Whisenant seems to be saying above is, "Jesus did say you can't know the day or hour of His return, and I agree. But the significance of Jesus' statement is that while it's Tuesday here, elsewhere in the world it's Wednesday. So, for you to pick a single date in this part of the world, you would be wrong in another part. That's the reason He said that. But He didn't say you couldn't know the *week* He would return — just the *day*." Thus, Whisenant skirts the *spirit* of what Jesus was saying by focusing solely on the *letter*.

Elsewhere, he contends that in Acts 1:7, where Jesus told His disciples that it was not for them "to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority," Whisenant maintains that this is an incorrect translation, and that we *can* know times and seasons!⁴⁷ In fact, Whisenant boldly claims that, "Only the *exact* day and hour of Jesus' return for His Church is unknown."⁴⁸

Whisenant also proclaims that, when the New American Standard Bible translates Acts 1:7 as, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority" — that the word "epoch" means "precise date,"⁴⁹ which is incorrect. An "epoch" is an "era," as any English dictionary would have informed him.

One researcher noted that as a result of Whisenant's faulty predictions, "Thousands took the booklet seriously, some even quitting their jobs to prepare for the rapture."⁵⁰ Undeterred by his failure, however, Whisenant didn't respond with repentance and contrition, but set the date 1989 and then other years after that as dates for the rapture.

In response to Whisenant and other date-setters, B.J. Oropeza, a researcher at the Christian Research Institute, wrote the helpful book *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*.⁵¹

4. Harold Camping and His End-Time Folly. Richard Abanes notes:

"While Whisenant was a relatively obscure individual until he made his false prophecy, the year 1992 saw a more well-known Christian personality — Harold Camping, founder of Family Radio and Open Forum — make his debut as an end-time date-setter."⁵²

Camping⁵³ predicted the end of the world in September 1994. In 1993, senior PFO researcher G. Richard Fisher noted:

"[Camping] states his premise on page 533 [of his book 1994?]: 'By God's mercy there are a few months left. However, if this study is accurate, and I believe with all my heart that it is, there will be no extensions in time. There will be no time for second-guessing. When Sept. 6, 1994 arrives, no one else can become saved. The end has come.'"⁵⁴

In 1994, but still prior to Camping's predicted September end-time date, in a subsequent issue of *The Quarterly Journal*, Fisher wrote another article critiquing Camping's date-setting, in which he observed:

"It seems that some never learn a thing from history. The great disappointment of the Adventists in the 1800s, the disenchantment of the failed dates of the Jeho-

vah's Witnesses throughout the 1900s, and the more recent let-downs of Edgar Whisenant ought to at least make people cautious. Camping's failure may make some more cautious but it also may throw others into skepticism and ridicule of the Christian message. That will be the tragedy of it all. ... Our prayer is that God will ready Harold Camping for genuine repentance and a renouncing of his bizarre extremes."⁵⁵

Sadly, however, Camping did not learn from his errors. More recently, in 2005, Camping published another large volume in which he predicts the end of the world — this time, in the fall of 2011. He says:

"For all of these reasons, it does not appear that we can know with any certainty the calendar date that will be the last day of the history of the world. We are probably far wiser in simply indicating that it will, in all likelihood, occur in the fall of A.D. 2011."⁵⁶

It should be noted that Camping believes that the end of the world and Christ's return occur simultaneously.⁵⁷

However, it appears that Camping has now thrown all caution to the wind by actually predicting a *specific date* for the end of the world. The *San Francisco Chronicle* carried a story on New Year's Day, 2010, about Camping and his 2011 prediction, which states:

"Camping, 88, has scrutinized the Bible for almost 70 years and says he has developed a mathematical system to interpret prophecies hidden within the Good Book. One night a few years ago, Camping, a civil engineer by trade, crunched the numbers and was stunned at what he'd found: The world will end May 21, 2011. This is not the first time Camping has made a bold prediction about Judgment Day.

On Sept. 6, 1994, dozens of Camping's believers gathered inside Alameda's Veterans Memorial Building to await the return of Christ, an event Camping had promised for two years. Followers dressed children in their Sunday best and held Bibles open-faced toward heaven. But the world did not end. Camping allowed that he may have made a mathematical error. He spent the next decade running new calculations, as well as overseeing a media company that has grown significantly in size and reach."⁵⁸

Noting that some of Camping's employees at his Oakland office wear T-shirts which read, "May 21, 2011," the article continues:

"They're happy to talk about the day they believe their souls will be retrieved by Christ. 'I'm looking forward to it,' said Ted Solomon, 60, who started listening to Camping in 1997. He's worked at Family Radio since 2004."⁵⁹

The article concludes:

"Rick LaCasse, who attended the September 1994 service in Alameda, said that 15 years later, his faith in Camping has only strengthened. 'Evidently, he was wrong,' LaCasse allowed, 'but this time it is going to happen. There was some doubt last time, but we didn't have any proofs. This time we do.' Would his opinion of Camping change if May 21, 2011, ended without incident? 'I can't even think like that,' LaCasse said. 'Everything is too positive right now. There's too little time to think like that.'"⁶⁰

There have been a number of other well-known Christian personalities who have set dates (or suggested dates) for the rapture and/or the return of Christ and/or the end of the world. Examples include:

Hal Lindsey: Well-known author of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, who sug-

gested that the rapture of the Church would take place by 1981, and the end of the world by 1988.⁶¹ In one of his books, he suggested that the 1980s might be the final decade.⁶²

Chuck Smith: Senior pastor of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California. He suggested the rapture of the Church would occur in 1981, basing his understanding for this on Hal Lindsey's teaching.⁶³

Lester Sumrall: A well-known Pentecostal preacher, who predicted the return of Jesus and the beginning of the Millennium by 2000.⁶⁴

Grant R. Jeffrey: A prolific Christian author, who suggested Christ's reign might begin in the fall of 2000.⁶⁵

Charles Taylor: A Bible prophecy teacher. Richard Kyle says that, "Taylor qualifies his predictions, calling them suggestions, not date-setting. Nevertheless, he suggested eleven dates from 1975 to 1989 for the rapture."⁶⁶

SUMMING UP

Robert Lightner, whom we cited earlier, notes:

"Date-setting for end-time events is of course not new. The founder of Adventism, William Miller, predicted Christ would return in 1843. [Charles] Taze Russell of the Jehovah's Witnesses set 1914 as the date of Christ's return. Herbert W. Armstrong, and his son, Garner Ted Armstrong, said in 1966 the kingdom of Christ would come in ten or fifteen years. Hal Lindsey, who rather recently popularized the pretribulational view, predicted Christ would return about forty years after the May 14, 1948 establishment of the nation Israel. See his *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and his more recent: *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon*, in which he asserts that this present generation is the one that will witness the return of Christ. Edgar C. Whisenant's prediction

... was accompanied with considerable boasting that he had incontrovertible proof that his date for Christ's return in 1988 was correct and, only if the Bible was wrong, could he be wrong. When it became obvious he *was* wrong, he changed the date to January 1989 and later updated it again to September 1989. Such dogmatic error serves only to hurt the cause with which it is associated."⁶⁷

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

The Lord Jesus Christ (and, afterwards, His apostles) taught numerous things about His return. While we cannot here cover all that the Bible teaches about His Second Coming, it is worth mentioning several things that are relevant to the topic of this article:

1. Jesus' followers will long to see Him and this desire will be exploited by some. Jesus told His disciples:

"The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day" (Luke 17:22-24).

Here Jesus tells His disciples that the time will come when they will desire or long to see Him, but will not see Him. This has certainly occurred in the lives of many Christians from the first century onward. Then Jesus shows us that this desire to see Him will be exploited by some who will proclaim that Jesus has already returned. This is even clearer in a passage that has some similarities to the one above, where Jesus tells His disciples:

"Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My

name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5).

Again, in that same passage, Christ warns:

"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:23-27).

We see here that this natural desire in the hearts of people, including Christians, to see the Lord will be exploited by those who will pretend to be Christ and those who will be false prophets. Jesus says that they will even show great signs and wonders in order to deceive and mislead people, even God's own people. (Whether these signs are genuine or bogus is not the point of our discussion here.)

Some others, Jesus says, will claim that He has returned to some remote location, such as a desert or an inner room. Jesus specifically warns His disciples not to believe such claims, rather, He says that when He returns, His coming will be obvious to all, just like lightning that lights up the entire sky.

2. God's people are to look expectantly for Jesus' return. A number of Scriptures teach that Christians should watch with anticipation for Jesus' return. For example, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples:

"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not

allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Matthew 24:42-44).

Again, Jesus offered these further words of instruction:

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:13).

"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning — lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:33-37).

Elsewhere in the New Testament, we find more Scriptures indicating that we are to look for the return of our Savior:

"...you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:7).

"O Lord, come!" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).

"To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!'" (Revelation 22:17).

"He who testifies to these things [i.e., the Lord Jesus] says, 'Surely, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

Leslie B. Flynn recounted a story about the famous nineteenth-century Scottish preacher Robert Murray McCheyne, who once:

"...was hosting a ministers' meeting in his home. In a lull in the conversation he asked the ministers individually, 'Do you think Jesus will come tonight?' All said, 'No, I think not.' After going the rounds and receiving the same answer, McCheyne solemnly repeated, 'Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh' (Matt. 24:44)."⁶⁸

While believers look with anticipation for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus, to those who do not believe in Him and/or do not look for His return, He will come like a thief — that is, the event will catch them unaware and unprepared. See, for example, verses of warning such as Matthew 24:42-44, Luke 12:39-40, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-10, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 3:2-3, and 16:15.

There will be negative consequences in store for some who do not look for His promised return, as Matthew 24:48-25:13, Luke 12:45-48, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-10, and Revelation 3:3 clearly show.

3. We should be doing the business of God until Jesus returns. Although the Lord Jesus told us to remain watchful for His return, this doesn't mean that a person should go and sell everything they own, move to a mountain somewhere, and wait for Jesus to come back, although some misguided people have done things like that. Rather, it means that we are to be watching for His return and to be doing the will of God so that we will be ready whenever He comes.

Perhaps you have heard the saying, "Jesus is coming. Look busy!!" Although this is intended to be humor-

ous, there is some truth to it. In one of Jesus' parables, given in Luke 19:11-27, the Lord told a story about a nobleman who went away to receive a kingdom and then return. The nobleman in the parable obviously represents the Lord Jesus Himself. He gives each of his slaves some money and he tells them, "Do business with this until I come back" (Luke 19:13, NASB). Likewise, we should be doing the will of Jesus on earth until He returns and receives us to Himself.

Apologist Ron Rhodes tells us:

"The timing of end-time events is completely in God's hands (Acts 1:7), and we haven't been given the precise details. As far as the second coming is concerned, we should live as if Jesus were coming today and yet prepare for the future as if He were not coming for a long time. Then we will be ready for time and eternity. ... So this is my challenge: Live your life in such a way that when the rapture occurs, you won't be embarrassed to see your Lord face-to-face. Let us live to please Him every single day."⁶⁹

We are to watch for the Lord's return, and be doing His will for our lives so that each of us will be ready whenever He may come. We should be watching for Him and doing His will so that we won't be ashamed whenever He returns. He *will* return, although the Father hasn't disclosed the time to anyone.

Related to doing the will of God, in Matthew chapter 25, Jesus gives the well-known parable of the talents. This parable teaches us that we should be about using the gifts that God has given us for His glory until Jesus returns. And when He returns, we will be judged for what we have done with the gifts that He has given us (e.g., see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10-12). Unlike the man with the one talent, who simply buried it, God intends for us to discover and use the gifts that He has given us for His glory.

4. To be prepared for Christ's return, we should abide in Him. The Apostle John instructs believers:

"And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

5. The delay in Christ's return will cause some to scoff, but His delay is a delay of mercy on His part. Although the New Testament speaks of Christ returning soon, we also find at least one indication that the length of time between His first and second comings might be misinterpreted by some as negating His promised return. In 2 Peter 3, we read:

"Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.' ... But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-10).

And the delay of His return could be one reason that the Savior said at the end of one of His parables, "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8, NIV).

THE RETURN OF OUR LORD

Scripture says, "Now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11). One thing we know with certainty is that Christ's return becomes closer every day. My theology professor, Dr. Lightner, has a small sign on his desk with the words, "Perhaps Today."

In early 1942, during World War II, the famous military general, Douglas MacArthur, was ordered by President Franklin Roosevelt to leave the Philippines and go to Australia. "On the trip to Melbourne, MacArthur made his famous statement of determination. 'I came through,' he declared, 'and I shall return.'"⁷⁰

Two-and-a-half years later, MacArthur kept his promise, landing in the Philippines. He said to his audience there, in part:

"This is the Voice of Freedom, General MacArthur speaking. People of the Philippines: I have returned. By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil. ... The hour of your redemption is here. ... Rally to me."⁷¹

That great general made a promise to the people of the Philippines that he would return to them and he kept his promise. How much more, then, should we believe it when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, promises that He will return to this earth?

As the Lord Jesus told us, we cannot know the day or the hour. However, one thing we can say with assurance is what God's Word tells us about it when it says:

"For *at just the right time* Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords" (1 Timothy 6:15, New Living Translation, emphasis added).

And so, with the Scriptures, we also say, "Maranatha" or "O Lord, come!" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. ... He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:17, 20).

Endnotes:

1. Robert Lightner, *Last Days Handbook*. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005, revised and updated edition, pg. 232, bold and italics in original. The bulk of the material in this book was originally published by Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tenn., 1990. Thomas Nelson Publishers also published the revised and updated edition in 1997. The current 2005 edition by Wipf and Stock is essentially the same as the 1997 edition, with some slight additions and changes. The 2005 edition will be cited in this article, because it is the newest edition; however, even the page numbering in the 1997 edition is the same as that in the 2005 edition. The purpose of this excellent book, at which it succeeds admirably, is well described on the title page of each of the three editions. It is "A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding the Different Views of Prophecy. Who believes what about prophecy and why." I highly recommend this book.

2. *Ibid.*, pg. 114. There are also some evangelical Christians — called preterists — who believe that the great tribulation took place in A.D. 70.

3. J. Daniel Hays, J. Scott Duvall, and C. Marvin Pate, *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007, pg. 192, s.v., "Great Tribulation," italics in original.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *Prophecy Watch*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1998, pg. 78, italic in original.

6. *Ibid.*, italics in original.

7. *Last Days Handbook*, op. cit., pg. 55, italics in original.

8. *Ibid.*, pg. 56.

9. *Ibid.*, pg. 4.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

11. *Ibid.*, pg. 120.

12. Whether or not the Christian world, at large, expected Jesus to return in A.D. 1000 is a matter of some scholarly disagreement. For a discussion of this debate, see Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998, pp. 170-174; also see, John A. Williams, *The Cost of Deception*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, pp. 121-123.

13. Christian Research Institute support letter, dated Sept. 14, 1994, copy on file, italic and underlining in original.

14. Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998, pg. 37.

15. *Ibid.*

16. One source correctly notes that this claim is "blasphemy." Jason Boyett, *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse*. Orlando: Relevant Books, 2005, pg. 30. This book is an irreverent, tongue-in-cheek book about the

end times. The claim of Montanus to be the personification of the Holy Spirit is also nonsense, because the Holy Spirit is *spirit*, and thus, by definition, is incorporeal, unlike Montanus.

17. *The Cost of Deception*, op. cit., pg. 137.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 49.

20. *The Cost of Deception*, op. cit., pg. 139. Williams references Otto Friedrich, *The End of the World: A History*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1986.

21. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 70.

22. *Ibid.*, pg. 64.

23. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pp. 337-342, Appendix C, entitled, "Timeline of Doom."

24. *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 26-73.

25. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pp. 337-338.

26. *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 31, 36-39.

27. Bruce Shelley, "The Great Disappointment," *Christian History*, 1999, Issue 61, pg. 31.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988, pg. 89, brackets in original. Hoekema here references Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*. Washington: Review and Herald, 1954, IV, pg. 463.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90. Hoekema here references Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*. Washington: Review and Herald, 1945, pg. 169.

31. From the magazine, *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 25, 1843, quoted by Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985, revised and expanded edition, pg. 412. Miller's expression about his date range being "according to the Jewish mode of computation of time" is unclear, because the dates that he references are actually in the years 5603-5604 in the Jewish calendar. The source for this is the "Jewish/Civil Date Converter." Document available at: www.chabad.org/calendar/1000year_cdo/aid/6225/jewish/Date-Converter.htm.

32. *The Four Major Cults*, op. cit., pg. 90. Also, see *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pg. 415.

33. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 89.

34. Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*. Boston: n.p., 1853, pg. 256, quoted in *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pg. 413.

35. *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pp. 413-414.

36. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 90.

37. Most of the information in this para-

graph is taken from *The Four Major Cults*, op. cit., pp. 223-224.

38. *The Four Major Cults*, op. cit., pg. 224, note 3.

39. This may or may not have been the same meeting and/or group where his faith in the Bible was restored. The time-frame for both incidents is similar, and if not the same, it would have been very natural if the Adventist group referred to above had been discussing the Second Coming of Christ.

40. Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?* Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1979, pg. 106. In 2001, a revised, expanded, and updated edition of this book was published by Regal Books, however, it doesn't contain the incident above which earlier editions contained.

41. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pg. 229.

42. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 93.

43. Edgar C. Whisenant, *On Borrowed Time*. Nashville: World Bible Society, 1988, New Expanded edition.

44. Edgar C. Whisenant, *88 REASONS Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988*. Nashville: World Bible Society, 1988, New Expanded edition.

45. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pg. 93, brackets in original. For the first Whisenant quotation above, Abanes cites "Edgar Whisenant, quoted in *A Critique on the 1988 Rapture Theory*. Oklahoma City: Southwest Radio Church, 1988, pg. 2." For the second Whisenant quotation, Abanes cites, "Edgar Whisenant, interview with radio host 'Greg' (no last name). Tape available at the Christian Research Institute, Rancho Santa Margarita, California." (Note: The Christian Research Institute is now located in Charlotte, N.C.)

46. *88 REASONS Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988*, op. cit., pp. 2-3, emphasis added.

47. *On Borrowed Time*, op. cit., pg. 1; also note 2 on that page.

48. *Ibid.*, pg. 1, emphasis added. See also note 2 on that same page, where he says that, "This implies that there are only two limitations to our knowing when Jesus will return for the Church: the day and the hour."

49. *Ibid.*, pg. 1, note 2, underlining in original.

50. Dean C. Halverson, "88 Reasons: What Went Wrong?," *Christian Research Journal*, Fall 1988, pg. 14. Halverson references "Book Predicts End of World; Some Quit Jobs," *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, 31 Sept. 1988, Part A. Document available at: www.equip.org/articles/88-reasons-what-went-wrong-

51. B.J. Oropeza, *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994. This book is also helpful in that it contains an Appendix listing the 99 reasons covered in

the body of the book, and also has an index.

52. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pg. 94.

53. *The Quarterly Journal* has featured at least three articles on Harold Camping: G. Richard Fisher, "Will Jesus Return in 1994? The Prognostications of Harold Camping," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1993, pp. 1, 13-14; G. Richard Fisher, "Ready for Failure? The Further Prognostications of Harold Camping," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1994, pp. 1, 12-14; and G. Richard Fisher, "The Hazardous Hermeneutics of Harold Camping – The End of the Church or His End?," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2002, pp. 1, 16-24.

54. "Will Jesus Return in 1994? The Prognostications of Harold Camping," op. cit., pg. 1. Fisher quotes from Harold Camping, 1994? New York: Vantage Press,

1992, pg. 533.

55. "Ready for Failure? The Further Prognostications of Harold Camping," op. cit., pg. 14.

56. Harold Camping, *Time Has An End: A Biblical History of the World 11,013 BC — AD 2011*. New York: Vantage Press, 2005, pg. 420.

57. *Ibid.*, pg. 11.

58. Justin Berton, "Biblical scholar's date for rapture: May 21, 2011," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 1, 2010, pg. C-1. Document available at: www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/01/01/BA8V1AV589.DTL.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*

61. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pp. 84-87.

62. *Ibid.*, pg. 85.

63. *Ibid.*, pg. 326.

64. *Ibid.*, pg. 99.

65. *Ibid.*, pg. 105.

66. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 121.

67. *Last Days Handbook*, op. cit., pg. 183, italics in original.

68. Roy B. Zuck, *The Speaker's Quote Book*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1997, pg. 341.

69. Ron Rhodes, *Christianity According to the Bible*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2006, pp. 251, 252.

70. *The Encyclopedia Americana*, International edition. Danbury, Conn.: Grolier, Incorporated, 1997, Vol. 18, pg. 7.

71. George Sweeting, *Who Said That?* Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, pg. 393, ellipsis in original, quote rendered in italics in original. First published as *Great Quotes and Illustrations*. Waco, Texas: Word, Incorporated, 1985.

ANNE RICE

(continued from page 1)

allows her dark and immoral novels to be sold. A Website that describes her seamy novels says:

"As Anne Rampling, Rice has published *Exit to Eden* and *Belinda*, both erotica, though *Belinda* has less of a raw erotic tone than does *Exit*, and is more of a romance involving an older man and a teenage girl. Under the pen name A.N. Roquelaure, Anne wrote the *Beauty* series, a trilogy of erotic work: *The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty* (1983), *Beauty's Punishment* (1984), *Beauty's Release* (1985). Her reasons for choosing the name A.N. Roquelaure are quite interesting. Roquelaure was in fact a cloak designed by Count Roquelaure in the 18th century, and Anne used it because of its meaning — 'Anne under a cloak' as well as because it had the right sound for erotica. ... The *Beauty* trilogy has sparked some controversy when the Columbus Metropolitan Library (Ohio) pulled the books from the shelves. The books were banned by the library after one person complained

about them. The library stated that the books were hard core S&M pornography."⁴

FROM CATHOLIC TO ATHEIST

There is little doubt regarding the early and deep indoctrination Rice had in Catholicism. She studied under nuns in a Catholic elementary school.

In her childhood, she was strongly committed to the Virgin Mary, believing the standard Catholic notion that "The Virgin Mary and the saints were close to God and they could 'intercede' for you."⁵ Young Rice was taught the titles of Mary which included, "Virgin Most Faithful; Mirror of Justice; Seat of Wisdom; Cause of Our Joy; Spiritual Vessel; Vessel of Honor; Singular Vessel of Devotion; Mystical Rose; Tower of David; Tower of Ivory; House of Gold."⁶ Her time in church was spent "addressing the Virgin Mary, talking to her, giving our hearts to her under all these many names, and praying for her to intercede with her Divine Son for us and help us."⁷ She had a desire to be a nun.⁸

Her belief growing up included transubstantiation, the teaching that the communion wafer and wine actually become the literal body and blood of Jesus. She writes, "The Body

and Blood of Jesus were in the golden tabernacle on the altar above"⁹ and "at the moment of the Consecration the miracle of Christ coming into the bread on the altar was being enacted or repeated ... This was Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament."¹⁰

Rice's early commitments also extended to the shrine at Lourdes when she describes:

"... a large stone edifice, in which the Blessed Mother stood with arms out, appearing to the kneeling figure of St. Bernadette. No Catholic school existed in those days that didn't have a grotto, with the Virgin and St. Bernadette. We all knew the Virgin had appeared to St. Bernadette in Lourdes, France, and that there was a great miraculous shrine there where people were constantly healed by the powerful waters that had sprung from the earth at the command of the Virgin to Bernadette."¹¹

But she wrote that in her college years, "My faith began to crack apart,"¹² and "I lost my faith."¹³ She adds:

"I stopped being a Catholic. I stopped arguing with people about being Catholic. I stopped