

The End is Near:
2012 and A Brief History of Human Prophecy

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For Quest Club

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I'm happy to be the bearer of quite a bit of good news this holiday season. Just this year, we have all survived at least two highly publicized "Judgment Days." The dire predictions for May 21 and then again October 21 were just the tip of the iceberg for those predicting how the world will end:

- For those inclined to join the "Chicken Little – The Sky Is Falling" faction of asteroid impact doomsayers, we survived two near passages of sizeable asteroids in November. On the evening of Nov. 8, an aircraft-carrier-sized asteroid named 2005 YU55 cruised past us at 8 miles a second, getting as close as a little over 200,000 miles away and cutting inside the distance from Earth to the moon. Then mid-month, a car-sized one whizzed past just 28,000 miles above Singapore. The next big asteroid – they name them now and this one is called "2010 AR85" with a diameter of 10 football fields – is expected to head our way in 2015.
- If galactic convergences are keeping you awake at night, the worry is that the sun is even now about to line up next week in a Winter Solstice aligned with "the center of the Milky Way galaxy" – just as it did last year, the year before, and for every one of the next 50 years.

- Pastor and author Tim LaHaye is set to release yet another version of his fabulously successful “Left Behind” series of fictional novels based on passages from the biblical books of Daniel, Matthew, and Revelations. Impressed by the 75 million books sold in that series, other authors have taken up the theme, most recently novelist Tom Perotta in a book out in August titled *The Leftovers*.
- Edgar Cayce’s predictions in the first half of the 20th Century about major cities flooding, disastrous earthquakes, the Earth’s poles shifting, and Atlantis rising don’t seem so far-fetched these days as more than half of Greenland is now exposed land, the Antarctic ice caps are shedding icebergs the size of Connecticut and rising sea levels threaten New York, London and the soon-to-vanish island paradise of The Seychelles.
- We have had to accept that Pluto is not a planet, but are you aware that there are predictions making the rounds of some 2 million (yes Million) -- websites that allege that we are about to see the impending arrival of “the Planet Nibiru?”¹ Yes, word has it that we are about to get bopped like a cosmic billiard ball just one year and six days from today by a surprise planet suddenly showing up in our solar neighborhood. Where did it come from, you are asking? Apparently from Wisconsin, where a channeler reported in 1995 that aliens had told her to warn the world that it would happen on May 27, 2003.² Or maybe some other, later date. Like 2012 – how about 2012?
- And let us not forget (but not get too upset about) the perennial concerns about UFOs and various types of extraterrestrials lurking about, waiting to either whisk us away to heaven, steal our souls and inhabit our bodies, or eat humans as hors d’oeuvres before consuming our entire lovely blue ball of a home orb.

With humanity facing a list like that, you can quickly see that life here on Earth can be a worrisome adventure.

While today’s topic may not at first strike us as a “typical” factual, civic-minded Quest paper, this assignment actually is not so unusual in the Quest Club’s venerable 100-year history. By my count,³ at least 9 other Questors have tackled some aspect of prophecy, fortunetelling, spirituality or forecasting future events. In 1973, Richard Frazier tackled the topic “The Occult in Vogue

Today.” In 1994, Lockwood Marine examined the legitimacy of Nostradamus and Gene Phillips reported on witchcraft and in 1995, Dick Bonsib completed the trifecta with a paper on prognosticators titled “Back to the Future.” Others who have stood before you to report on matters of religious belief, spirituality, the occult, philosophy, or forecasting have included Sam Fletcher, Paul Krauss, David Silletto, Paul Stier, Rosetta Moses-Hill, Rabbi Safran, and Father Cory Randall. If you search in the Quest database of papers at the library on the words “future” and “next,” the list of papers that have sought to look ahead takes up many pages.

Therefore in respect for those Questers’s previous presentations, today I will NOT go into much depth about Nostradamus, witchcraft, astrologers and the occult movements, diviners and fortunetellers. Instead, I hope to explore some of the religious history and philosophical and psychological underpinnings of our now-worldwide expectations of a return of a savior and a time when peace reigns and chaos is made right.

Judgment Day 2011

So, let’s begin with the events that stirred so much interest earlier this year in Judgment Day 2011. Those two highly publicized “Ends of the World” that I mentioned in opening were both brought to us by a radio evangelist named Harold Camping, from Oakland, California. Camping is merely the latest person to seek to interpret a variety of verses from the 66 books of the Christian Bible to puzzle out a specific date when his listeners could fill in their DayTimers with one last “To Do List.”

My first encounter with Camping’s predictions was in early February of this year, when on a visit to Los Angeles, I was intrigued by two sets of billboards scattered around Hollywood. One proclaimed the date in 10-foot tall letters printed over a photo of rockets firing into spaceships over Malibu Beach. “3-11-11. The Battle Begins.” It was for a new science fiction film called *Battle: Los Angeles* and featured the actor Aaron Eckhart who years ago starred in a film shot here in Fort Wayne, called In the Company of Men. The second set of billboards said “Judgment Day May 21.” The image was of a person kneeling, against a red-orange background with a Good-Housekeeping-Seal-type of gold circle in the upper left corner somewhat plaintively noting that “The Bible Guarantees It!”

On March 11, Eckhart's *Battle: LA* movie opened well enough to make back a solid profit, bringing in \$83.4 million in the first 6-weeks of release.⁴ On May 21, Harold Camping's *Armageddon: World* was a flop. The 5,000 billboards put up in 30 countries by Camping's Family Radio network cost more than \$100 million. Extraordinary media attention made the May 21 prediction common knowledge. Urgency was added by the astonishing, epic earthquake that ravaged coastal Japan on April 11. Camping's predictions of unprecedented earthquakes and destruction seemed to fit with the Fukushima disaster and subsequent nuclear meltdown. People abandoned families, ran up credit accounts certain that they would not have to pay it back, and on May 20, one man on Long Island called the pizzeria back to urge faster delivery because "time was running out!"⁵ Tragically there also were a scattering of suicides and murders by those whose fear of looming disaster got the better of their fragile grip on rationality.⁶

Camping himself admitted that he was "flabbergasted" that nothing happened, and then he went into seclusion to reconsider the clues. He emerged two days later with an explanation. Having also predicted judgment days 12 times since his first one in 1978,⁷ he was no stranger to the situation -- although this time the scale of attention on May 21 had been so intense that he said "only God could have orchestrated" the level of attention.⁸ God and \$100 million in billboards. He liked to say that "All in all, I am a humble teacher," and as such, he humbly went on to explain that he had made a few errors in his calculations and the correct date probably should be OCTOBER 21, 2011. When that date, too, passed unremarkably, Camping rapidly faded from the news reports. These days, he has become the subject of dozens of blogs and website reports calling him a false prophet, a cult leader, and at the very least, a failure at predictions.

Camping's flirtations with setting the date for apocalypse are only one set of hundreds of examples from history's footnotes. In the new book *Apocalypse Not*, author John Michael Greer makes a case for the "apocalypse meme."⁹ A meme, which rhymes with "team" and is spelled "m-e-m-e," is a relatively new term defined as "an idea, behavior or style that spreads from person to person."¹⁰ A meme is also described as an idea that "goes viral" or spreads like a virus. In the case of the Apocalypse Meme, best estimates are that it has been around to spread its mischief for approximately 3,500 years. First, let's look into the dim past for clues as to why we are vulnerable to that viral idea.

Origins of the idea

A hotly debated question among those who study early hominids concerns the two species who coexisted in Europe for about 15,000 years. One is the anatomically most modern branch of our family tree, called Cro-Magnon. They beat out another branch we call Neanderthal. The theory is that they were able to win because the Cro-Magnon clans were better at adapting to climate changes that occurred from 30,000 to about 28,000 years ago.¹¹ With their longer legs and use of fire to cook food, Cro-Magnons were better adapted to the Ice Age environment than the stockier Neanderthals. But there may have been one more factor. Scientists also wonder if the Cro-Magnon brain may have powered better abilities to recall and recognize patterns. That would have allowed Cro-Magnon Joe and Jessica to predict weather and hunting seasons. This ability to forecast would have provided a significant survival skill advantage for people in a competition for increasingly scarce resources -- the Cro-Magnon's secret weapon in the final battle for supremacy in our ancestral family tree.

We cannot say whether humankind has always contemplated the end of times, because we cannot say when it was that humans first became aware of the concept of time itself. The great ruins of Stonehenge date from about 4,000 to 5,000 years ago, although some early works on the site may prove to be even older, perhaps as old as 10,000 years. Other Neolithic sites with large stone works and earthen mounds around the world have been dated within that historical range as well. Archaeologists have long suggested that these sites had functions as calendars, used not only to mark the passage of time and to guide crop-planting and animal migration patterns for hunters, but to also house ceremonies intended to influence the future. Developing calendar systems and sites to measure time also was part of the work of shaping many of the communities that became civilizations. It seems to have taken at least several thousand years more years of human development, however, for us to come up with the idea that things were bad enough to merit divine intervention for serious world repair.

The earliest record of a predicted "end of the world" is often credited to an Assyrian clay tablet reputed to have been found in Constantinople in the early years of the 1900s. The tablet reputedly dates from approximately 4,800 years ago and included this lament:

“Our earth is degenerate in these latter days. There are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end. Bribery and corruption are common. Children no longer obey their parents. Every man wants to write a book, and the end of the world is evidently approaching”¹²

Whether this led to a plague of authors, we don't know. Scholars of ancient Assyria do know, however, that Assyria did not exist 4,800 years ago, and so the existence of such a tablet is, to them, highly suspect and will not be believed until such time as the tablet itself is brought forth for inspection.

A more credible early source for the idea of a future apocalypse is the writings of an Iranian/Persian sage who lived about 1200 to 1500 BCE named Zoroaster, also translated as Zarathustra. Americans likely have heard this name as part of the title of the memorable symphonic poem “Also Sprach Zarathustra,” by Richard Strauss which added to the drama of the evolution scene in the 1968 movie *2001, A Space Odyssey*.

What Zarathustra “sprach” was the basis for one of the earliest monotheistic religions. Zoroastrianism believes that there is one universal and transcendent God. This god is called Ahura Mazda, and he is said to be the one uncreated Creator to whom all worship is ultimately directed.¹³ Ahura Mazda's creation is characterized by truth and order, and is the opposite of chaos, falsehood and disorder. Humanity has an active role to play in keeping evil and chaos at bay by exercising our free will to choose good thoughts, good words, and good. At the end of time, a savior-figure will appear and begin a series of events that concludes with Ahura Mazda defeating the forces of evil. This victory ushers in the new world of goodness and order.

Zoroaster's religion lives still today, with its strongest community no longer in Iran, but in the Indian cities of Mumbai and Gujarat State, as well as sizeable temples in Sydney, Australia and among the Iranians refugees in Los Angeles.¹⁴ Zoroaster's vision is also echoed in some aspects of China's Taoist religions and India's Vedic stories of Hinduism.

With the story thriving in the largest empires in Israel's neighborhood at the time when the Old Testament was being written down, it's not surprising then that aspects of it would be included there, too. Comparative religion scholars in the 20th century noted that Zoroaster's apocalyptic

aspects may be reflected in the Jewish belief system after Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the years of captivity. The term for this absorption of various religious traditions is called “syncretism.” We most often associate the practice with the Roman Empire and the early Christian church, as for example in the way the Dec. 25 date of Christmas now coincides with the ancient Winter Solstice festivals and how pagan practices are allowed in Halloween, to be balanced by All Saints Day.

The idea that the Bible also includes syncretic material, though, would be astonishing, even blasphemous, to some. But those who are able to identify the ages of Hebrew used in the various books of the Old Testament have pointed out that prior to the conquest of Assyria and exile to Babylon, the God of Israel and Judah was not expected to do much more than watch out for the children of Abraham.¹⁵ In the texts using older Hebrew and from *before* the Babylonian captivity, Abraham’s God only asks his followers to “have no other Gods before me.” After Babylon, his followers describe Him as the one true god of the entire cosmos, creator of the world, able to order the future as well as work miracles to save his prophet. The struggle between the believers who stayed behind, holding to the older beliefs, and those who survived in the foreign lands shows up for scholars studying the Books of Nehemiah and Ezra.¹⁶

Throughout the almost 2,000 years between the Roman destruction of Solomon’s Temple and the foundation of modern Israel in 1947, there have been numerous men who have volunteered to serve as the prophesied Jewish Messiah. A particularly memorable one was Shabbati Zevi, a Sephardic Jew born in Smyrna, Turkey under the Ottoman Caliphate. He was a scholar of both the Talmud and the Kabbalah and won a large and devoted following at the same time that he had a knack for upsetting rabbis.¹⁷ By 1665, his followers began to describe him as a “man of God” and then Messiah and he was happy to agree with them.

Fervor began to build for mass migration back to Jerusalem – for example, the entire Jewish population of Avignon, France left home to head east. Pamphlets supporting Zevi made good use of the still-new printing press, and militants began to flock to his cause. At that point in 1666, the Sultan of Constantinople called Zevi to court and demanded that he convert to Islam or forfeit his head. When Zevi decided to convert, the movement collapsed. I imagine the Jews of Avignon endured more than a little teasing upon their return.

China's troubles with messianic wars

Europeans were not the only ones vulnerable to the excitement of a revised world. In China, recurrent bloodbaths have been sparked by visions of the false gods being discredited and dying off and new heavens of the true faith establishing Kingdoms of Great Peace. One of the earliest recorded was credited to a Taoist mystic named Chang TaoLing, who lived in a cave in Szechwan province. Chang's vision was that the Tao TeChing's great prophet Lao Tzu had come to him to tell him the gods being worshipped at that time, in 142 CE, were dead energies. Chang's followers established a sect called the Way of Great Peace and taught that the world was about to end in a great catastrophe, and Lao Tzu would return to protect the faithful from harm. As a mark of the great change, the sky was expected to change from blue to yellow. Followers adopted yellow headwraps to show their hope for the new world.

The Yellow Turban rebels soon decided to nudge the change forward since the Emperor Han Ling was a weak and corrupt ruler. Three brothers named Shang formed an army to assault the Imperial Palace, but their army was exterminated under blue skies. The Yellow Turban Rebellion was repeated many times over the past 2,000 years, at the cost of millions of lives. Every one of the dynasties that have ruled China right up to the Manchu Dynasty had to deal with actual or threatened rebellions on the part of underground sects who were convinced that the Mandate of Heaven had passed to them and the existing dynasty would be overthrown by supernatural forces.¹⁸

This long history in China of prophesy-driven civil wars may be playing a part in our times in the current government's harsh repression of the Falun Dafa or Falun Gong religious movement. It was founded as a Buddhist tai qigong exercise regimen by Li HongZhi. While it is hard to know how reliable the internet resources are regarding this group, Mr. Li's story takes an odd turn with an interview in 1999 that Mr Li gave to Time Magazine. He claimed that aliens had introduced modern machines like computers and airplanes so as to take over the human race.¹⁹ He elaborated by saying "I am trying to save those people who can return to a high level and to a high moral level. Modern science does not understand this, so governments can do nothing. The only person in the entire world who knows this is myself alone."²⁰ Taoist early literature from the Yellow Turban era apparently mentions a future savior figure named Li Hong, and the

prophesies concerning Li Hong's appearance have been used to legitimize numerous rebellions and insurgencies over the centuries.²¹ Thus, when the Falun Dafa's leader named Li HongZHI starts speaking of supernatural conquests, it is no surprise that he could set off alarm bells in China's governmental security corridors.

The Mayan Connection

There are many who find a more scientific curiosity in the reported predictions of a group of people we were taught had “vanished mysteriously” – the Maya of Central America. The most often-cited source for those who have set the world's next alleged ending date is the claim that the ancient Mayan Long Count Calendar contains a prediction that the “Fourth World” ends next year on Dec. 20 and a new world begins the next day, Dec. 21. In popular culture, this heralds the end not only of all humanity, but possibly even the planet itself will be destroyed. Like a disaster magnet, the new date has attracted all sorts of other alleged predictions and prophesies, from Nostradamus to psychic channelers, who have adjusted their predictions to fit this new date.

So what is the real situation, as best a layperson can tell, with the Mayan Calendar?

As you can see from the illustration at each table, the calendar takes the form of stone carvings called glyphs. Thanks to some breakthroughs in deciphering this complex and highly visual text, scholars today can read these glyphs as easily as a Japanese banker can read the Kanji pictograms or Archaeologist Zakhi Hawas can read hieroglyphics in Egyptian tombs. Each glyph carries both a sound and a meaning, so the trained reader must combine both to get the meaning. It is much like a rebus puzzle, where a picture of an eye, the letter H close to a picture of an ear and a drawing of a female sheep would be read aloud as “I hear you.”

One of the leading scholars in cracking the Mayan code was a former Red Army artilleryman named Yuri Knorozov (Nor-ROZZ-ov). Before World War Two, Yuri had been a student of archaeology and ethnography at Moscow State. During the last days of the war, in May of 1945 while sweeping into Berlin with the Red Army, Knorozov spotted a book about to be shipped away from the Prussian State Library collection. Before the box was tossed onto a train headed for warehouses in Moscow, Yuri pulled it out, not knowing he had just saved a rare edition of the three known reproductions of Mayan writing then known – The Dresden, Madrid and Paris

Codices. As for the other books on those trains from Berlin? Some 350,000 volumes from those shipments east were destroyed and another 300,000 are still missing in what turned out to be one of the greatest losses of written knowledge since the destruction of the Library of Alexandria.

Yuri published several papers on the Mesoamerican writings, culminating in published transcripts in 1975. While his work has attracted critics, it won over many skeptics in 1973 when a group of scholars using his method at the Mayan Site of Palenque were able to decipher a list of rulers of that city-state.²²

So, the Mayan carvings on sacred sites across Mexico, the Yucatan, and Guatemala can now be deciphered with a greater degree of confidence about what they say. Practically weekly now, they are yielding the secrets of a 1,000-year civilization that have been hidden under the jungle growth for more than 600 years.

One of the secrets has been a new understanding of the Mayan Calendar and their philosophy of time in relation to the activities of their gods and kings. Mayans, like many peoples of this hemisphere, regard time as cyclical, not linear like Europeans do. So when they divided time up into Worlds, think of it instead as Cycles. When a stone tablet found at a site of Tortuguero in Tabasco state spoke of the return of a Mayan god named Bolon Yokte at the end of the 13th Baktun, there was nothing about worlds ending. It was more about party planning, according to a presentation two weeks ago as part of a special round table of 60 Maya experts held in Palenque by the Mexican Institute of Anthropology and History. In his presentation, scholar Sven Gronemeyer of LaTrobe University in Australia²³ stated that “For the elite of Tortuguero, it was clear that they would have to prepare the land for the return” of the god’s attention “and for the ruler to be host of this holy day.”

The Mayan calendaring system itself is fascinating, and worth a whole paper in itself. I will attempt, however, to give you at least a very brief introduction to it. They used two types of calendars both of which used with several groupings of time, much like our calendar of weeks, months, years, decades and centuries.

One was the Calendar Round System, which provided a fascinating calculator used for commerce and religious purposes. It consisted of two parts.²⁴

1. The 260-day tzolkin (zol-KEEN), which is made up of a system of numbers and day-signs. The daysigns also carried meanings that the priests could use as something of a sacred database
2. The 365-day haab, which is used to schedule mundane events like agricultural events and festivals.

Working like two gears rotating against each other, these would produce a Calendar Round, which is completed when the tzolkin and haab come back to their starting points after 18,980 days or just 13 days short of 52 years.

The second system was what has become known as the Mayan Long Count system. This is a mostly base 20 calculator that is suitable for tracking extremely long time periods such as historical and astronomical records. For the Maya, the parts of the best known Long Count Calendar go like this:

• 1 day = 1 Kin
• 20 days = 1 Uinal
• 360 days = 1 Tun
• 7,200 days = 1 Katun (20 Tuns or 19.7 years)
• 144,000 days = 1 Baktun (20 Katuns or 394.26 years)
• 1,872,000 days = 13 Baktuns (or one Era or World of 5,125.36 years)

(There are also four other even longer term units of measurement that are occasionally found on the Mayan carvings. One sets a date some 400 million years in the future from when the stone was set in place, so clearly, the Fourth world was not the last they envisioned.)

Using this sort of notation, a scribe could record an event that included Venus being in a certain location in the sky as 9.1.15.9.0, and know that it Venus would be in that same position three Katuns later in 9.1.15.11.0. The end of the last era of 13 Baktun has been identified as August 11, 3114 BCE, which is how the date of Dec. 20, 2012 was pinned down as the end of this Cycle, with Dec 21 as the start of the 14th Baktun. The significance for the Mayans is that it is a great cause for celebration to be alive for the end of a 13-Baktun cycle, and so, according to all

reputable scholars Dec. 20 would be would be what we might call a jubilee date or very high holy day, not a date for an apocalyptic event.

Of Philosophy and Theology

We have come a long way through the History of Prophecy, and still hardly touched at all on the most contagious of all the versions of the Apocalypse meme – the Second Coming of Christ. Just as the study of “how we know what we know” is called epistemology, and the study of the human mind and its behavior is called psychology, there is a special category within theology that deals with the study of the end times – or having faith in the Promised Endtimes.

Eschatology-minded theologians focus on four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. Christian eschatology seeks to deepen understanding of Christ’s words from the New Testament Books of John, Matthew and Mark, as well as parts of several other books in the Old and New Testaments. The ways in which the many pieces relating to prophecies about the end times that are contained within the Bible are studied can be more than a little varied. There are some -- like Lutheran pastors at Concordia Seminary and the current Pope Benedict’s writings as Cardinal Ratzinger in Vatican publications -- who take a scholarly and intellectually rigorous approach. Others, like Tim LaHaye and Harold Camping, tackle it like a puzzle or secret code. In fact, a best-seller by Michael Drosnin in 1997 titled *The Bible Code* took the idea of embedded clues beyond just text analysis into a giant WordSearch puzzle that he claimed set forth many, many predictions. And still others who browse the Internet collecting ideas with little analysis of the material they read.

Modern times or end times?

Here in the United States, we are a country whose founders included a religious sect who headed across the Atlantic to form a New Jerusalem about 50 years before the Jews of Avignon packed up and headed for the old Jerusalem. We call them the Pilgrims. Cotton Mather expected the year 1697 to be the end, and as is apparently usual, when that didn’t happen, he revised it to 1716. Even Christopher Columbus got into the game with a prediction that the world would end in 1658, based on the claim that the world was created in 5343 BCE, and would end 7,000 years later.

By the 1800s, the always excitable religious innovators in America reached new levels of publicity. One of the most memorable was a fellow from upstate New York named William Miller. After surviving a near miss from a cannon shot in the War of 1812, he became a Baptist preacher. He studied the Bible intensively and became convinced that Daniel 8:14: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" meant that in 2300 years from 457 BCE when the Persian King decreed that the Temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt, Jesus would return to purify the Earth with fire. That meant that the year 1844 would be when to expect the Second Coming. He began to publicly announce his predictions in 1831, and by 1840, he was no longer a voice in the wilderness, thanks to the promotion of his message by a prominent Boston churchman Joshua Vaughan Himes. To promote Miller's urgent message, Himes founded a biweekly newspaper and helped promote events in anticipation of the Second Advent. The Millerite movement at its pinnacle is estimated to have numbered as many as 500,000 persons.

When the year 1844 came and went as usual, the Millerites admitted their disappointment, which in the annals of American religious events became known as the Great Disappointment. His followers founded at least two new church denominations – the Adventist Churches and the Seventh-Day Adventists. If you would like to learn more about what William Miller taught, there are pamphlets available today in the churches started by his true believers, which include the group we know as the Jehovah's Witnesses. And thus, the excitement of a War of 1812 veteran for the Second Coming may be in part responsible for the next tract you find tucked into your front door.

The Psychology behind it all

So -- why do we care? Is it a desire to see our enemies tormented by a bigger power? Has life on earth gotten too complicated and we have a childish wish to zoom up to a land of comfort and ease?²⁵ Or is it just some form of distraction? Why do fools become fooled, whether the trickster is Sabbati Zevi, David Koresh, or William Miller. What is at work that led people to drink Jim Jones' Kool-Aid at the end of his little world in Guyana?

People do things because there is some kind of reward in the doing of it. So what is the "payoff" that feeds the spread of the Apocalypse Meme from decade to decade, country to country?

Author Greer in his book *Apocalypse Not* suggests that “To true believers, whether their belief fixates on a religious doctrine or a secular one, the apocalypse meme promises a future in which they will be proved right and everyone who disagrees with them will be forced to admit the error of their ways ... The one common feature to the wild diversity of its promises is the hope of sudden, total, and permanent end to the dissatisfactions that are inseparable from life in the real world.”²⁶ The idea that the world will end is thus a seductive one, offering a free ticket out, Greer says. Carl Jung would agree: “Historically, it is chiefly in times of physical, political, economic or spiritual distress that men’s eyes turn with anxious hope to the future, and when anticipations, utopias, and apocalyptic visions multiply,”²⁷

In Joseph M. Felsler’s book *The Myth of the Great Ending*, he digs deep into the motivations for believing in the end of the world, the ultimate transformational myth. He notes that the particulars are not important – it is the idea of the superior force that will sweep aside the details, vexations and particulars that matters. And what is the secret tucked into all those prophecies? Listen closely and I will whisper it to you now:

The end of the world is not really about the future. It is about how we choose to align ourselves with opportunity right now.

In this way, the endtimes prophesies can be seen as a mirror version of another hysteria of our times: the investment bubble. Bubbles are characterized by the common wisdom that whatever is valued will ALWAYS rise in value. You will always be able to sell your tulip bulb, Enron stock or house for more than you paid for it. Just as the laws of economics impose a sort of gravity on soaring prices, the proven laws of nature tell us that the End of the World will not come simply because of a number on a calendar or glyph carved on a stone.

I suspect that the future and those who seek to “tame it by naming it” will continue to be a recurring interest to the Quest Club because we share an interest in making the world a better place than we found it. Whether it was the shared interest in improving business practices by the original members or learning more about nuclear energy’s future prospects later this year, we believe in the power of information.

And so, in conclusion, my gift to you, my fellow Questors in this holiday season, is to go out on a sturdy limb and reassure you that the chances are good that (1) there will be a world to greet you THIS coming Christmas Day, and (2) the world will still be here next Christmas Day, too.

For some parting words of wisdom, I offer these from an obscure and disgraced Wall Street trader named Henry Stanley Haskins, from a small book titled *Meditations in Wall Street*, published in 1940:

Glory lies in the estimation of lookers-on.

When lookers-on perish, as countless generations have done,

Glory perishes, as countless glories have done.

*What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.*²⁸

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Endnotes

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- ² Nancy Lieder, psychic channeler and alien abductee, as reported on her website, <http://www.zetatalk.com/> retrieved 12/14/2011.
- ³ Quest Club papers from the Allen County Public Library, as retrieved from <http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/ssh/pdf/questsubject.pdf>
- ⁴ IMDb Internet Movie Database entry retrieved from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1217613/>
- ⁵ Lee, Dan P., "After the Rapture," *New York Magazine*, issue of Oct. 24, 2011, page 30.
- ⁶ Lee, *ibid*, page 30.
- ⁷ ABC News report as retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/business/2011/10/harold-camping-doomsday-prophet-wrong-again/>
- ⁸ *Ibid*, p. 30.
- ⁹ Greer, John Michael, *Apocalypse Not: Everything You Know about 2012, Nostradamus and the Rapture Is Wrong*, Kindle location 136 of 2219.
- ¹⁰ Meriam Webster online dictionary
- ¹¹ Hillary Mayell, "Climate Change Killed Neanderthals, Study Says," in National Geographic Magazine, Feb. 9, 2004, as retrieved from http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/02/0209_040209_neandertals.html
- ¹² While most commonly ascribed to Isaac Asimov from his 1979 book *Isaac Asimov's Book of Facts*, (ISBN 9780517065037), the earliest known citation of the text is from 1922 in Report of the State Librarian to The Governor, State of Connecticut: Public Document No. 13, "Librarian's Report, 1920-22", Page 93, "Report Submitted November 18, 1922 by State Librarian George S. Godard", Published by the State of Connecticut, Hartford, Connecticut.
- ¹³ From Wikipedia article on Zoroastrianism, this passage is cited as from [Zoroastrianism: Holy text, beliefs and practices](http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/ot_grp9/ot_zorhist_20051007.html)". Retrieved from the now defunct internet site at http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/ot_grp9/ot_zorhist_20051007.html.
- ¹⁴ Wikipedia, as retrieved from the site <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism#Demographics> on 12-14-2011.
- ¹⁵ Greer, *ibid*, page 29.
- ¹⁶ Greer, *ibid*, page 34.
- ¹⁷ From the Jewish Virtual Library, as retrieved on 12/14.2011 from <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Zvi.html>
- ¹⁸ Greer, *Ibid*, page 22.
- ¹⁹ Dowell, William, "Interview with Li Hongzhi," Time Magazine World, Monday, May 10, 1999, as retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2053761,00.html>
- ²⁰ Time Magazine interview, *ibid*.
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- ²² Wikipedia entry retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuri_Knorozov on 12-14-211.
- ²³ Adriana Gomez Licon, "Expert: Mexico glyphs don't predict apocalypse," from <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/decoding-mexico-glyphs-rules-apocalypse-15061286> on 11/30/20.
- ²⁴ The explanation of the Mayan calendaring system is from *The 2012 Story*, from pages 65 to 71.

²⁵ Pappas, Stephanie, “The Draw of Doomsday: Why People Look Forward to the End,” LiveScience website May 16, 2011, as retrieved from <http://www.livescience.com/14179-doomsday-psychology-21-judgment-day-apocalypse.html> on 5-22-2011.

²⁶ Greer, *ibid*, page 167-168.

²⁷ C.G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, translation by RFC. Hull (Signet Edition: New York, NY) 2006.), p. 3.

²⁸ Henry S. Haskins in “Meditations in Wall Street.” (William Morrow & Co.) As retrieved from <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2011/01/11/what-lies-within/> on 12/14/2011.



For the Maya, the parts of the best known Long Count Calendar go like this:

• 1 day = 1 Kin
• 20 days = 1 Uinal
• 360 days = 1 Tun
• 7,200 days = 1 Katun (20 Tuns or 19.7 years)
• 144,000 days = 1 Baktun (20 Katuns or 394.26 years)
• 1,872,000 days = 13 Baktuns (or one Era or World of 5,125.36 years)

(There are also four other even longer term units of measurement that are occasionally found on the Mayan carvings. One sets a date some 400 million years in the future from when the stone was set in place, so clearly, the Fourth world was not the last they envisioned.)

