

THE END TIMES: ARE WE THERE YET?

End Times talk piques the interest of believers. The subject activates mouths of many ministers. Jesus' disciples asked him about the subject. Modern followers also seek answers. "Inquiring minds want to know," as the tabloid says.

Jesus gave few clues about his Second Coming. He advised his contemporaries: "Watch out that no one deceives you," *Matthew 24:4*. He warned us not to fret over the numerous incidents false prophets claim as signs of The End.

A careful reading of *Matthew 24* helps us avoid prophetic tomfoolery. Comets, earthquakes, famines, and wars don't signify the end. They have occurred and will continue throughout recorded history. Jesus said that they merely signify, "the beginning of birth pains." How many pregnant women have been transported to the hospital prematurely because someone thought a few contractions meant the real thing?

Does the *Book of Revelation* predict the end? It warns us of a final day—the Judgment. But interpreters often misjudge *Revelation's* numbers. Sevens, tens, and twelves suggest completeness in differing contexts, but readers should not take these numbers literally.

Any prophet who claims to know the time of the end is, in the words of Shakespeare, "one full of sound and fury signifying nothing." Four facts demand attention.

First, God has already set the Last Day to a nanosecond. Next, Jesus said that as: "lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man," (*verse 27*). His coming will be swift, without warning, and unmistakable. Third, students who stay current don't mind surprise exams. If we honor God, we shall always be glad for Jesus' return. Finally, every one of us will experience his or her own last day. Are you ready for yours?