

Endings and new beginnings

by **Connie Brisson**

I've always been afraid of the 'end of the world' - even as a kid.

So when the idea of being in the Mayan Riviera, Mexico on December 21st (the 'last day' of the Mayan calendar) became a possibility, I was both scared and excited. While doomsayers predicted 'the end of time', others said it would herald in a new era of consciousness. I liked the second door.

One of the things that drew me to the Mayan Riviera again was a mystical experience I had on an earlier trip (a few years ago) when we visited *Rio Secreto*, an underground cave.

The Riviera Maya is home to the longest, most spectacular underwater caves in the world. The Mayans consider these underground places sacred and gifted by the gods. This is why, when on this cave tour, everyone proceeds through a ceremony of purification and protection and is blessed by a Mayan shaman before entering the cave.

Each cave has an altar, whether you are entering it or exiting it. When we finished the cave tour a few years ago, our guide said we could leave something we wanted to 'let go of' on the underground altar at the end of the cave (that we wanted help with from the gods). I mentally placed something on that altar that I'd been really struggling with for about 10 years. Amazingly, within a week after we came home, a major change occurred and since then I've often wished I'd asked for help with other things.

Because I knew it was powerful, it was important to me to undergo this cave journey again. So as soon as we got there, I booked the tour.

Something unusual that happens in the middle of this underground cave tour is that for a moment you sit down in the water and everyone turns off their hat lights. Our guide told us that this was one of the few times in our lives that we would be able to experience *total* darkness.

After sitting in complete blackness for a few minutes, I saw a stream of light that looked like a gliding snake across the ceiling of the cave. Snakes and serpents are very significant in many cultures, symbols of transformation. The Vision Serpent was also a symbol of rebirth in Mayan mythology. This was not something that I'd experienced years earlier. No one else

said a thing, but later my daughter, Gabrielle, told me that she saw the snake image too.

Then, when the big moment arrived (the last altar of the cave), this particular tour guide did not mention one word about it. In fact, it all happened so quickly that I had to really concentrate on what I wanted to leave on the altar. Although this surprised me, I knew it was somehow significant.

A few days later, on December 21st, the last day of the Mayan Calendar, we went to Xel Ha (a spiritual Mayan archeological site that is now a natural aquarium park). We participated in a special 2012 ceremony where another Mayan shaman performed a spiritual purification ceremony followed by a 'Ceremony of the Thousand Candles,' where each person there made a prayer request and then launched a candle that floated off into the lake. It was one of the most beautiful and extraordinary group events I've ever participated in.



Then back at home, as normal life resumed, I waited somewhat impatiently, wondering if my cave and/or candle prayers would ever get answered.

Then, last night it happened unexpectedly, the way prayers are often secretly answered. While reading a novel I came upon a sentence that stopped my breathing.

"Is this really it?" I asked myself. Could this simple sentence, discretely placed in this novel, really be the antidote that freed me from a fear that has plagued me for over 20 years? Had that Mayan cave altar and candle prayers actually delivered me an answer that many previous years of searching, healing sessions and therapies had not?

I read that sentence over and over, soaking it in. I knew I'd just received a profound answer, but I was shocked to find this gift in such an unlikely place. This one moment had in fact answered *both* of my prayer requests, even though I had asked for different things at each place. I was, as I always am, in awe of every part of the process.

Sometimes we're scared of the end; other times we can't wait for things to end. But the one thing that all endings simultaneously bring, like a circle, is new a beginning. We are given the opportunity to start again, to sing a new song, to write a new story...

Connie