

The End of Time On Earth



THE END

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THE END OF TIME ON EARTH

For Bible believers everywhere, somewhere in the back of our minds there looms thoughts and questions about the end, the day when Jesus will come back and everything that is on this earth, as we know it, will shut down. The questions begin to multiply. When is that going to be? What's going to happen? Will the earth continue? Will it be destroyed? What will happen to our bodies? What about the dead? The questions go on and on and on. Those questions are spurred periodically by our subconscious to our conscious by volatile world events, and by "end of time" prognosticators.

When is Time Going to End?

We all want to know when. Is it going to be today? Is it going to be tomorrow? Will it be 100 years? 1000 years? When is Jesus coming back and when will time--as we know it--end?

There are many theories. You can go back in history and see where there have been vain attempts to try to predict the end of time. For example, if you look back to William Miller, a figure associated with the founding of Seventh-Day Adventist religion, he predicted the date of Christ's Second coming as being somewhere between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. He prepared all of his camps for that Second Coming and the end of time and nothing happened. He assumed he had miscalculated the date so he re-figured. This time it was going to be October 22, 1844, but again nothing happened. I don't really need to tell you the rest of that, do I?

In an effort to advance his movement, Charles Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, advanced the notion that Jesus was going to return in 1874. But again, the wait was in vain.

In the 1980's an author brought in a great deal of money for potentially projecting the date of the rapture. Then when he missed that date, he put it a little bit farther ahead. All of that has come and gone as well. Let me make a couple of statements about those predictions--recent or long ago. All of those predictions stem from a handful of verses, some of which are found in the first half of Matthew 24, which was not spoken by Jesus about the end of time but the destruction of Jerusalem. Some come from apocalyptic literature. That's vivid literature filled with imagery (some in the Old Testament, some from the book of Revelation). Most of the time, pulled out of context from verses not meant to apply to the end of time at all.

In fact, if you study the Bible with any scrutiny at all, you realize that the predictions are pure folly because "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." (2 Peter 3:10) Listen to the words of Jesus from the last part of Matthew 24, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father."

The point is when anyone informs the world that he or she has suddenly discovered the time of the Lord's Second Coming, they immediately reveal themselves as a false prophet. Because the day of the Lord will come like a "thief in the night".

What is Not Going to Happen

We don't know when. There has been such a proliferation of propaganda concerning what's going to happen when the end of time occurs. Let's go to the Bible to find out what is not going to happen when Jesus comes again.

1. Not set up a Kingdom

One of the more popular theories regarding the last days is the fact that Jesus will come and establish some kind of utopian 1,000 year reign, during which time there will be peace and prosperity all across the earth. According to this theory, which is called the Millennial Theory, the temple of the Jews is going to be rebuilt, temple worship

will be restored, Jesus will rule from David's throne for 1,000 years, and he will evangelize the world from that throne.

The doctrine has its roots all the way back to C. L. Schofield and some others, but frankly, it's not Biblical. Oh it's true there is a kingdom and there are also Biblical prophecies about the Messiah sitting on David's throne, but the Bible teaches these prophecies have already been fulfilled. The Messiah has come and he has already established his kingdom. In fact, here is an inspired interpretation of those very prophecies. It is found in Acts 2:29-33 when Peter preached the first sermon about Christ on Pentecost Day.

"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."

Peter said this prophecy about Jesus was fulfilled when he was resurrected. Right now he is seated on his throne, and the kingdom is under his charge now. All the prophecies about the kingdom reign are fulfilled in the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus. Speaking of Jesus, Colossians 1:13 states "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves". The same is true in 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death." It just says the same thing; Jesus is reigning over his kingdom now.

2. No 1000-Year Reign

"Where do they get the idea about the 1,000-year reign?" That comes from Revelation 20. If we begin to take every image and symbol and number from Revelation literally, we will be the most confused people on the face of the earth. Written apocalyptically, the number 1,000 is a symbol. Ten (a number of completeness) cubed, which represents further completeness. That 1,000-year reign represents the last days of the Christian age, and we are living in that right now. It's the 1,000-year reign. So, don't misunderstand. God is not coming again to set up a kingdom, the kingdom is here.

3. No Special Favor on the Jews

This is a spin-off to the Millennial Theory, it's a premillennial idea that Jesus' Second Coming will be just before that 1,000-year reign. The concept is the Jews will be saved during that 1,000-year period of evangelism and they will be instruments of Christ to evangelize the rest of mankind, those still lost up to that point. During that time, the Jews will supposedly come from all over the earth to their homeland of Palestine when Christ will bestow special favor on them. Christ will then begin to reign over all man. If there is one thing the Bible makes abundantly clear in the New Testament, it is that the time of any nation or race of people receiving special favor from God has long since past. It is never to be revived, and not to be resurrected.

When Peter was instructed by God in Acts 10 to go to Cornelius and open the doors of the kingdom to the Gentiles, Peter did as he was told (with some coaxing). But here's the conclusion he reached in Acts 10:34-35: Then Peter began to speak, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right."

If there was any question about God coming to bestow special favoritism on the Jews, or anybody else, Paul answered that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:28-29)
The time has long since passed where God will bestow special favoritism on a race of people.

4. No Rapture

Almost everyone has heard the "rapture theory", that one day, there is going to be an evacuation--that really will be more like a vaporization -- of all the Christians on earth. Suddenly, they are just going to disappear. Then after the rapture, supposedly, there will come some seven-year period of tribulation, then 1,000-year reign, and then you know the rest of it from what we have just discussed.

"Where did that idea come from?" That concept goes all the way back to James Brooks in the latter part of the 19th century. It comes from two great passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-55. In both of those passages, Paul speaks of the dead being raised then the living being caught in the air, given a new incorruptible body to live with through eternity. In those passages there is no indication that life on earth is going to go on as usual; that all of those who are not saved are going to keep doing their thing. To the contrary, Philippians 2:10-11 says, "Every knee is going to bow, every tongue is going to confess." Matthew 25:34-46 tells us that when Jesus appears again, that is going to be followed immediately by a great judgment scene, not some rapturous disappearance of the saints. That is not found in the Bible.

What Will Happen

Let the Word of God tell us in passages that deal with the Second Coming of Jesus what will happen at the end of time.

1. The Lord will appear [a spectacular thing]

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, and the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God..." (2 Thessalonians 4:16a) Every human being living on the face of the earth, whenever that day is, will hear that trumpet and our attention will be suddenly captured on a moment's notice.

2. The dead will be raised

"The dead in Christ will be raised first." (2 Thessalonians 4:16b) That is corroborated in I Corinthians 15:52 "in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable." When Jesus comes again, the graves are going to be emptied. all of those that we have known.

3. The living are going to be changed

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep (i.e. die), but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51)

These first three things are all going to happen practically simultaneously:

- a) A trumpet will sound
- b) The voice of the archangel
- c) The dead will come out of the graves, and the living at that time will be caught in the air with them. Therefore, all of humanity, from the beginning of time, will be caught up in the air with Christ himself. It is going to be something, isn't it?

4. A Great Separation—Judgment

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left." (Matthew 25:31)

5. Inheritance for the Righteous

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:34)

6. Sentence Pronounced on the Disobedient

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Matthew 25:41)

John writes (having seen that revelation), "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books." (Revelation 20:12)

7. The destruction of the earth

"The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens¹ will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." (2 Peter 3:10)

^[1]The vaulted expanse of the sky (2) Aerial or atmospheric heavens, as "birds of heaven" or "clouds of heaven" (3) Siderial heavens, the region of the "sun," "moon," and "stars]

This earth is not going to continue for another 1,000 years after Jesus returns. Jesus is not coming to set up a kingdom. He's going to deliver the kingdom that is already his to the Father after the judgment. Those of us who are part of that kingdom live forever with the Father for eternity.

Conclusion

I realize that when one talks about the end of time and the Second Coming of Jesus, it is a fearful thing for many people. It is not meant to be for those in Christ. We've been reading from it two or three times in the lesson. But in 2 Thessalonians 4:18 "...encourage one another with these words." Oh, if you are in Christ, it is going to be the greatest day that ever happened. It will be the most beautiful day you've ever seen, and the sound of the shout and the trumpet will be the most beautiful things your ears have ever heard if you are a Christian. That is what's going to happen at the end of time. The question is "**Are you ready?**"

Lesson # 1015

Questions

1. The Bible clearly states when time on earth will end.
True ____ False ____
2. The end of time on earth can be calculate.
True ____ False ____
3. At the 2nd coming, Christ will establish His kingdom during the 1000-year reign followed by the rapture.
True ____ False ____
4. At the 2nd coming, Christ will appear, the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised and the living will be caught up in the air.
True ____ False ____
5. Are you ready for Christ's to return and God's Judgment?
Yes ____ No ____

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