

# The End: Only the Beginning

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We have heard many rumors of the certain coming of the end of the world. All of these rumored dates anxiously came and caused many to fear, many to celebrate, and many to doubt. Yet all of those dates have come and gone and yet we're all still here. Recently, there have even been increasing news reports of a coming zombie apocalypse. There is obviously a lot of stirring and curiosity regarding the end of mankind; when and how it will come to pass.

Is the end of the world just a myth?  
What does the Bible say about the end of the world?  
What signs should we be looking for?  
Will things get better or worse?  
Is there anything that we can do to prepare for the end?  
If the world does end, how will it happen?  
Will there be an alien invasion?  
Will we destroy ourselves by war?  
Will there be a viral outbreak that causes us to all become zombies?  
Will the earth be swallowed up by the sun?  
Will the earth be knocked out of orbit by a giant meteor?

As with all things, we go to the word of God for the true answers pertaining to our questions regarding the end times.

However, before going straight to the end times, we first must understand something about God and who He is. There are various attributes of God that seem to exist in tension and almost at conflict with each other. We know that God is merciful, loving, and patient. We know that He does not treat us as our sins deserve. After all, the penalty of sin is death; blood must be shed to cover and atone for our sin. Jesus Christ made this sacrifice Himself by shedding His blood once and for all. We deserve death, yet God gives us life abundantly.

However, God is also holy, righteous, and a jealous God who serves full justice impartially and with integrity. He is a just judge whose wrath and judgment will not be put off forever. God would not be good if those who deny His salvation did not receive the penalty that their sins deserve. Jesus paid this penalty for those who accept it, but for those who do not, they must pay the penalty themselves.

Often in life, we get frustrated as a result of this tension because it seems that those who do evil and deny God with their lifestyles seem to always get ahead and get away with their actions when those who obey God and do good seem to often struggle through life. We wonder why God would allow this when it would seem that He, being just, would choose to punish those who do evil and promote those who do good. We're not alone in feeling this way. In fact, Asaph felt this way, too, as we see written here:

## **Psalms 73:2-17**

2 But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;

I had nearly lost my foothold.

3 For I envied the arrogant

when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

4 They have no struggles;

their bodies are healthy and strong.

5 They are free from common human burdens;

they are not plagued by human ills.  
6 Therefore pride is their necklace;  
they clothe themselves with violence.  
7 From their callous hearts comes iniquity;  
their evil imaginations have no limits.  
8 They scoff, and speak with malice;  
with arrogance they threaten oppression.  
9 Their mouths lay claim to heaven,  
and their tongues take possession of the earth.  
10 Therefore their people turn to them  
and drink up waters in abundance.  
11 They say, “How would God know?  
Does the Most High know anything?”  
12 This is what the wicked are like—  
always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.  
13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure  
and have washed my hands in innocence.  
14 All day long I have been afflicted,  
and every morning brings new punishments.  
15 If I had spoken out like that,  
I would have betrayed your children.  
16 When I tried to understand all this,  
it troubled me deeply  
17 till I entered the sanctuary of God;  
then I understood their final destiny.

When we look only at this temporary life, it is easy to get frustrated when we see what appears to be injustice. However, when we look at the big picture, we see that justice is the Lord’s and that it will come in due time. We actually see an interesting concept throughout scripture where God often waited until the full measure of people’s sins were reached before serving justice.

Right now, we live in the time of God’s enduring grace, mercy, and patience. God is patiently giving us all ample time to accept His salvation. However, there will come a day when the wrath and judgment of God is poured out; during the last of days.

Jesus came two centuries ago not to judge the world, but to save the world through Him. However, He is coming again. This time, He comes to gather all those who have accepted His salvation to Him, to pour out the long held off judgment and wrath of God (currently written on a double sided scroll all sealed up in Heaven containing detailed events of a time of horrific tribulation), to put a final end to evil, to destroy the heavens and earth as we know them, and to create a new heaven and a new earth.

Oh what an awesome and glorious day that will be for those who accept Him now!

However, what a dreadful and awful day that will be for those who have foolishly rejected Him!

## **2 Peter 3:3-13**

3 Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. 8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and

everything done in it will be laid bare.11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Many scoff today at the thought of Jesus coming again. They view God's patience with them as evidence that the coming of Jesus isn't truth, but rather, a myth. When the end comes, it will come like a thief in the night; suddenly and unexpectedly.

Matthew chapter 24, Mark chapter 13, and Luke chapter 21 all record an account of when Jesus described to the disciples that the end will come, what signs to watch for, as well as when the end will come. Just like us today, the disciples were very curious and wanted to know these things.

As with any eyewitness account, there are a few small differences in what each of them recorded. This morning, I'm going to share a merged account of when this took place as to share as much of this account as possible.

#### **Luke 21:5-11**

5 Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, 6 "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."7 "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?"8 He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. 9 When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."10 Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

#### **Matthew 24:6;8**

6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

8 All these are the beginning of birth pains.

As we'll find reading through this, things will get far worse before God makes all things new and good.

Indeed, we have seen all of these forewarned events take place already; and likely will continue to see them occur more frequently as the end draws closer. Many have claimed that 'the end is near' and all of those set end dates and times have come and gone, just as Jesus said that they would. Many have been deceived by them. Some have even followed cult leaders believing them to be their savior. We have seen great and powerful natural disasters and worldwide wars already. We see pestilences and famines in many regions of the world. Many events have occurred which struck fear into the hearts of mankind as well as signs from the heavens taking place. Jesus did not say that all of these things are the end, but that they are only the beginning of the birth pains leading up to the end and that they should NOT alarm us.

#### **Luke 21:12-15**

12 "But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. 13 And so you will bear testimony to me. 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

#### **Mark 13:11b**

Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

#### **Luke 21:16-19**

16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. 17 Everyone will hate you because of me. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 Stand firm, and you will win life.

#### **Matthew 24:9b-14**

9b you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13 but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

We can take a stand and fight for our rights and freedoms, however, the words of Jesus will still ring true in the end. The freedom that we have as followers of Christ have nothing to do with political or governmental freedoms. These can easily be removed, but the freedom that we have in Christ can never be removed even by imprisonment, torture, or even by death. In all these things, we still are free! Christians will be severely persecuted as they already are in many areas across the world right now. We will be handed over to the authorities by our own relatives and friends; even our own children and parents. Everyone will hate us because we follow Jesus and we will be put to death. All nations, including

the USA, will hate us because we follow Jesus. Love will grow cold, hate will increase. However, we still are called to preach the truth, to love those who hate, and to stand firm to the end.

It shouldn't be a surprise to us that many will turn away from the faith at this time. In Matthew 10, Jesus warned us about this very thing and said that if we acknowledge Him before man, He will acknowledge us before the Heavenly Father, however, if we deny Him before man, He also will deny knowing us before the Heavenly Father. He warned us not to fear man who can, at most, kill our body, but to rather fear the one who can destroy both our body and soul in hell. He also assured us that He cares for us so much that He even knows the amount of hairs on our head and that not even a single sparrow falls to the ground outside of the Father's care and that we are valued to Him far greater than a sparrow. How many of us are ashamed of Jesus before man because of what they might think of us or because we may get rejected by them? If we deny Jesus this easily, how many more will deny Jesus when their lives are on the line? Jesus said that whoever finds their lives will lose them, but whoever loses their lives for Him will find it. It is moments like these when our faith gets put to the true test. If we pass this test, we have an eternal kingdom of glory as our inheritance that far outweighs any cost that we could give in this lifetime!

The true question is, 'How much do we value Jesus?'. He valued us so much that He gave His very life for us at the hands of those who hated Him. He isn't asking us to do anything that He has not already done Himself. He also has gone before us to give us full assurance and hope of the life that awaits us on the other side of death. He's worth it and so is our eternal dwelling place!

#### **Luke 21:20**

20 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.

#### **Matthew 24:15-27**

15 when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Many of the warnings pertaining to the end times can be observed by watching Israel. This nation is still God's chosen people and they will still be saved in the end. Romans 11 refers to this mystery where we learn that the hearts of Israel have been hardened until the full amount of us Gentiles are saved. However, they will still play an incredibly critical role during end time events, which we'll learn more about later. From the response of the people that Jesus is about to give, you can begin to imagine how horrific the years of the tribulation will be when God pours out His wrath and judgment on those who have rejected Him. We'll go over these in detail later as well.

17 Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. 18 Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. 19 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! 20 Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. 22 "If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. 23 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you ahead of time. 26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **Luke 21:25-28**

25 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

#### **Matthew 24:29-44**

29 "Immediately after the distress of those days""the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

30 "Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

32 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 33 Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. 34 Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. 36 "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39

and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. 42 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

**Mark 13:33-37**

33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. 34 It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. 35 “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. 37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’” **Luke 21:34-36**

34 “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

Although only the Heavenly Father knows the precise day and time that the end will come, we still are given signs to watch for that indicate its coming. Next week, we’re going to learn the details of what events will occur during the end times and what they will be like.

The fact that things are going to get worse before they are made new and good by God isn’t very encouraging. The fact that followers of Christ are certain to be hated and experience extreme persecution and death doesn’t exactly make one want to jump for joy. Why did Jesus give us this information about the end? How does He expect us to respond to this?

Again, we can’t focus on the temporary life spent in this tent of a body. This life is here today and gone tomorrow. In fact, none of us are even guaranteed our next breath. Next week, we’re going to learn of events that are far worse than anything that we have learned of this morning and far worse than anything that has ever occurred since the beginning of creation. We will learn also of the eternal destiny for all of those who rejected God’s salvation.

Although we know that things will get more difficult here on earth for us, we keep our eyes fixed on eternity and the glorious new beginning that God gives to those who stand firm with Him till the end. There will be a day when He wipes every tear from our eyes, heals all of our pain and sickness, and gives us new, glorious bodies that will never experience these things again for all of eternity. The difficulty that we will face is absolutely nothing in light of what will be experienced by the wrath and judgment that God pours out on the ungodly as a result.

Our response to these things should be one of urgency and compassion on those who have not yet accepted God’s salvation. All of the tribulation that we are going to learn about during the end times next week can be avoided simply by placing our faith in the salvation provided by Jesus. It is such a simple choice, but has such tremendous impact on our lives.

It’s a choice to walk away from death and into life. It is a choice to walk away from the penalty of sin into the blessings of abundant life. It is an eternal decision to receive an eternal body dwelling with the Lord forever with no pain, death, sickness, or sadness or to receive an eternal body dwelling away from the Lord in the darkness weeping and enduring torment forever. The choice is simple.

If you have never made the choice to follow Jesus or have grown lukewarm or cold in following Him, today is the day of God’s salvation. This morning, pray with me to commit for the first time or recommit your life to Christ. It’s a choice that, in the end, you’ll be very glad that you made!