

The End of the World?

The times that we are living in are unlike any that we've seen before. Leaders of our country, businessmen, people who have positions of trust and authority, are all looking at the condition of our nation—and of the world—and wondering what's going to happen next. Everyone's watching the headlines. They're looking at the unsettled conditions of society and foreign relations, and they watch as natural disasters destroy homes and cities from the poorest to the wealthy. They cringe as the news reports show the decay of morality. They see the intensity that accompanies everything we are seeing today, and they seem to understand that big things are about to happen—things that will change the course of history. People want to know: Are we coming to the end?

There always seems to be a new theory about when or how the world will end. Around the turn of the millennium, people were saying that the world would end in the year 2000. Obviously it didn't. Now people are talking about the year 2012, showing reasons why they think this could be the year it happens. There are a lot of theories out there, but there has never been a more reliable book to turn to for accurate prophecies than the Bible.

Prophecies in the Bible

There are hundreds of prophecies in the Bible that have already been fulfilled. Ancient Egyptians found out ahead of time about the seven years of plenty followed by seven years of extreme famine in Genesis 41. The nation of Israel discovered in Jeremiah 25 that because of its unfaithfulness, it would be taken into captivity by the nation of Babylon. When that happened, the king who took them captive had a dream, found in Daniel 2, which gave a prophecy about the successive reigns of world powers from his time until the end. Among the most amazingly accurate prophecies of the Bible are those which pointed to Jesus. In Daniel 9:25-27, we can read about when Jesus would be born and when He would die. Other texts like Isaiah 53:7 and Psalm 22:7-8 also foretell different aspects of Jesus' life.

The Bible & End-Time Prophecies

Although we can see many different types of prophecy in the Bible, one of the most common is apocalyptic, or end-time prophecy. There are two books which mainly contain this kind of prophecy: the Old Testament book of Daniel, and the New Testament book of Revelation. In fact, 1 in every 25 verses in the New Testament alone mentions the second coming of Jesus Christ.

As much as it says about the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus, the Bible does not tell us when it will take place. "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36). "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night..." (2 Peter 3:10). But it does give us some guidelines to see when it is close. "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars" (Matthew 24:6). "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:25-27).

The Bible here gives us some milestones to see when we're getting close to the end. There will be natural disasters and wars, and people will be afraid of what's going to happen next. But that's not all it says about the end. Matthew 24:24 warns us: "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect." So, according to the Bible, there will be more than just physical destruction and chaos at the end, but the same will be found true spiritually.

It is the purpose of Satan to deceive everyone he possibly can—and he doesn't differentiate between those who go to church and those who don't. He doesn't care if you call yourself an atheist, a Christian, a Buddhist, or any of the others. In fact, he likes it if you go to church and don't live what you learn. If you look

closely at the stories of the Bible, you'll see that the people who claim to follow God but don't do what He says have the same punishment as those who refuse to know God altogether. "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3).

How to be Ready for the End

So we must then ask the question: "How can I be ready for the end of time?" The Bible gives several guidelines for how to be ready. If we follow them wholeheartedly, we can be sure that we will be ready when Jesus comes again. Don't think you're immune. Jesus warns us multiple times in the verses of Matthew 24 not to be deceived. If it weren't a very real possibility, He probably would not emphasize it. The end of the world will be rough. Daniel 12:1 tells us, "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time." It's not going to be easy, but the Bible also offers hope. "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21). How do we know we're not being deceived? "If they do not speak according to this word [the Bible], it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

Give your whole life to Jesus. Not just parts here and there. God can only forgive sins which you confess and give to Him. That's one thing that Satan loves—when people say they belong to God and continue living how they want to. We also shouldn't put it off into the future. "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is" (Mark 13:33). Be ready for Jesus' coming at any time. Don't fool yourself into thinking it's in 20 years or even in three years. Nobody knows—so be ready now.

Tell your friends. Another event happens before the end comes: all will choose whom they will serve. Matthew 24:14 says, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." At the end of time there will only be two groups of people: those who serve God and are ready to see Him come in the clouds of glory (Isaiah 25:9), and those who are destroyed by the brightness of His coming (Revelation 6:16-17).

There are only two options for you. Accept the free invitation of Jesus and live your life for Him, or live your life to please yourself—and find out at the finish line that it's not worth the price of your eternal life. The end of the world is not just talk: it's close, and it will be tough. What is your choice?

