

The Crossing Church

FIRST WEDNESDAY

January 4, 2012

“Introduction to End Times”

Isaiah 46:9-11; Matthew 24:7

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Question: "Surviving the end times - what do I need to know?"

Answer: Oftentimes, people experience anxiety when they think about the future; however, it does not have to be that way. For those who know God, thoughts concerning the future bring about eagerness and comfort. As an example, describing a woman who knows and trusts God, [Proverbs 31:25](#) says, “She smiles at the future.”

The two key thoughts to keep in mind about the future are, first, God is sovereign and in control over everything. He knows the future and absolutely controls what will happen. The Bible says, “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, *Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’ . . . Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it*” ([Isaiah 46:9–11](#), emphasis added).

The second thing to remember about the future is that the Bible outlines in specific details exactly what will occur in what Scripture calls “the end times” or “latter days.” Because the Bible is God’s revelation to humankind, and because God knows and controls the future (as Isaiah says above), then it stands to reason that when the Bible speaks about what will occur in the future, we can believe it. Concerning predictions about the future, the Bible says, “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” ([2 Peter 1:21](#)). This truth is made evident by the fact that, unlike supposed prophecies made in other religions or by individuals (e.g., Nostradamus) who said they could predict the future that did not come true, the Bible has never once been wrong – every time the Bible has predicted a future event, it happened exactly as Scripture said it would.

When considering how to understand and survive in the end times, three key questions need to be answered:

1. *How should I interpret what the Bible says about the future (biblical prophecy)?*
2. *What does the Bible say will happen in the end times?*
3. *How should what the Bible says about the future affect the way I live today?*

How to Interpret Biblical Prophecy

There are a number of opinions and viewpoints that surround what interpretative methods students of the Bible should use when reading passages in Scripture that concern the end times. While there are good people espousing different beliefs, there is good evidence to believe that biblical prophecy should be interpreted (1) literally, (2) with a futurist view, and (3) in what is called a “premillennial” manner. With respect to a literal interpretation, it should be understood that there are some 300 prophecies that concern the first coming of

Christ, all of which were literally fulfilled. The predictions surrounding the Messiah's birth, life, betrayal, death and resurrection were not fulfilled allegorically or in a spiritual manner. Jesus literally was born in Bethlehem, performed miracles, was betrayed by a close friend for 30 pieces of silver, was pierced in His hands and feet, died with thieves, was buried in a rich man's tomb, and was resurrected three days after His death. All of these prophecies were predicted hundreds and thousands of years before Jesus was born and were literally fulfilled. And while, indeed, there is symbolism used in various prophecies (e.g., dragons, horsemen, etc.), all of it portrays literal beings or events, in much the same way that Jesus is spoken of as a lion and a lamb. Regarding a futurist view, the Bible clearly states that prophetic books like Daniel and Revelation contain not only renditions of past, historical events, but also things that will happen in the future.

When John was given his commands for the churches of his day, he then received his visions concerning the futuristic things that would occur in the end times and was told, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place *after these things*" ([Revelation 4:1](#), emphasis added).

But perhaps even a stronger argument for a futurist view revolves around the promises God made to Abraham (cf. Genesis 12 & 15) concerning the land of Israel. Since God's covenant with Abraham was unconditional, and His promises have not yet been fulfilled to the Israeli people, then a futurist view of Israel and the prophecies surrounding the people of Israel's return and possession of Palestine must occur.

Lastly, with respect to prophecy being interpreted in a "premillennial" manner, this means that Jesus Christ will return and then reign over the earth for 1,000 years in a perfect rule. Five times in Revelation 20, the Scripture says that Jesus will return first and then reign for 1,000 years (hence the name "pre-," indicating "before," and "millennial," which means "1,000"). There is no reason to take what Scripture says in any other way except that Jesus will first return and then begin a 1,000-year rule over the earth. But what does the Bible say will happen before then?

What Does the Bible say will happen in the End Times?

Sadly, the Bible predicts a downward spiral of catastrophes, human sin, and religious apostasy before Christ returns. Paul writes, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. . . . evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" ([2 Timothy 3:1, 13](#)). The world will continue to reject God, His Word, and His people.

Some day in the future – a day no one knows – God will end the Church age which began in the first century on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2) with an event known as the **Rapture**. This will be when God removes all believers in Christ from the earth in preparation for His final judgments. Of the Rapture, Paul says, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." ([1 Thessalonians 4:14–18](#)).

The erosion of peace and increase of turmoil that precedes the Rapture will reach epic proportions when untold numbers of people disappear from earth. Such a vacuum will cause panic and scream for a strong leader who

will have answers to all the world's questions and problems. The setting of the stage for this leader has been in progress for some time, as historian Arnold Toynbee has noted: "By forcing on mankind more and more lethal weapons, and at the same time making the world more and more interdependent economically, technology has brought mankind to such a degree of distress that we are ripe for the deifying of any new Caesar who might succeed in giving the world unity and peace." Out of a revived Roman Empire, one that is organized in a European ten-constituency fashion (cf. [Daniel 7:24](#); [Revelation 13:1](#)), the **Antichrist** will arise and sign a covenant with the nation of Israel, which will officially begin God's prophetic seven-year countdown to Christ's second coming (cf. [Daniel 9:27](#)).

For three and a half years, the Antichrist will reign over the earth with a false peace being promised, but a peace that is nothing but a trap for the people of the earth as the Bible says: "While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape" ([1 Thessalonians 5:3](#)). Wars, earthquakes, famines, and more will escalate (cf. [Matthew 24:7](#)) until the end Antichrist's 3.5-year reign, when he will enter a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and proclaim himself to be God and demand worship (cf. [2 Thessalonians 2:4](#); [Matthew 24: 15](#)). It is at that point that the Creator and true God responds to the challenge. For another 3.5 years, a Great Tribulation will occur such as has never before come upon the earth, one which the prophets and Jesus predicted: "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short" ([Matthew 24:21–22](#)).

Untold loss of life and destruction of the earth will occur during this period. Also, many will come to faith in Christ, yet many will do so at cost of their lives. But God's sovereign hand will still be in control as the Lord Himself gathers the unbelieving armies of the world together for His collective judgment of them. Of this event, the prophet Joel wrote, "I will gather all the nations And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there On behalf of My people" ([Joel 3:2](#)). John records the battle this way: "And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan] and out of the mouth of the beast [the Antichrist] and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. ('Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.') And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon" ([Revelation 16:13–16](#)).

At this point, the Messiah Jesus will return, destroy His enemies, and claim the world, which is rightfully His. John's revelation describes this glorious event in this manner: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.' Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in mid-heaven, 'Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of

mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.’ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh” ([Revelation 19:11–21](#)).

After Christ has defeated all the armies gathered in the valley of Armageddon, He will reign for one thousand years in a perfect rule with His saints and fully restore Israel to her land. At the end of a thousand years, a final judgment of the nations and all remaining mankind will occur, which is then followed with either an eternal state spent with God for those who follow Him or an eternal separation from Him for those who do not (cf. Revelation 20-21).

The above are not speculations or possibilities – they describe exactly and precisely what will take place in the future. Just as all prophecies came true and were fulfilled in Christ’s first coming, there is no reason to believe anything will be different with those that speak of His return to the earth.

Given the truth behind these prophecies, what impact should they have on us now? Peter asks the question in this manner: **“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!”** ([2 Peter 3:11–12](#)).

The Effect of Bible Prophecy on Us Today

There are four effects that the truths of Bible prophecy should have on us today. **The first is obedience**, which is what Peter speaks about in the verses above. Jesus continually tells us to be ready for His coming, which could come at any time (cf. [Mark 13:33-37](#)) and to live in a way in which we are not ashamed of our lives and behavior.

The second is worship. Because God has provided a way to escape His end-time judgments, we need to be sure we receive His free gift of salvation offered through Jesus now and live in gratitude before Him. John shows this in his description of heavenly worship for Jesus: “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation’” ([Revelation 5:9](#)).

The third is proclamation. The message of God’s salvation and the truth of His second coming need to be proclaimed for all to hear, especially to those who don’t yet believe so they can turn to God and be saved from His coming wrath. [Revelation 22:10](#) says, “And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.”

The last effect God’s prophetic Word should have on us is service. All believers should be diligent about carrying out God’s will and performing good works that are an outworking of the salvation that has taken place in each Christian’s heart. Part of Christ’s judgments will be of the works performed by believers. They do not determine a Christian’s acceptance into Heaven, but show what each believer did with the gifts and

opportunities given him or her by God. Paul says of this judgment, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" ([2 Corinthians 5:10](#)).

All of this can be summed up with the same thoughts that began this article. God is sovereign over all events and people of the world, He is firmly in control of everything, and will bring a perfect end to everything He has started. An old Christian song puts it like this: "All is God's creation ... Fashioned by One hand ... Satan and Salvation ... Under One command."

The fact that the Bible is a supernatural book is evidenced by the truth that every prophecy conveyed by it to date has been fulfilled. This being the case, it is reasonable and rational to conclude that what it says about the prophecies for the end times will occur as well. For those who know Jesus and have trusted Him as their Lord and Savior, His coming will be their blessed hope (cf. [Titus 2:13](#)). But for those who have willingly rejected Christ, He will be their holy terror (cf. [2 Thessalonians 1:8](#)). The bottom line is this: to survive the end times, make sure you are a believer in Christ: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" ([1 Thessalonians 5:9](#)).

Summary and Additions

Question: "What is going to happen according to end times prophecy?"

Answer: The Bible has a lot to say about the end times. Nearly every book of the Bible contains prophecy regarding the end times. Taking all of these prophecies and organizing them can be difficult. Following is a very brief summary of what the Bible declares will happen in the end times.

Christ will remove all born-again believers from the earth in an event known as the rapture ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#); [1 Corinthians 15:51-54](#)). At the judgment seat of Christ, these believers will be rewarded for good works and faithful service during their time on earth or will lose rewards, but not eternal life, for lack of service and obedience ([1 Corinthians 3:11-15](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#)).

The Antichrist (the beast) will come into power and will sign a covenant with Israel for seven years ([Daniel 9:27](#)). This seven-year period of time is known as the "tribulation." During the tribulation, there will be terrible wars, famines, plagues, and natural disasters. God will be pouring out His wrath against sin, evil, and wickedness. The tribulation will include the appearance of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, and the seven seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments.

About halfway through the seven years, the Antichrist will break the peace covenant with Israel and make war against it. The Antichrist will commit "the abomination of desolation" and set up an image of himself to be worshipped in the Jerusalem temple ([Daniel 9:27](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:3-10](#)), which will have been rebuilt. The second half of the tribulation is known as "the great tribulation" ([Revelation 7:14](#)) and "the time of Jacob's trouble" ([Jeremiah 30:7](#)).

At the end of the seven-year tribulation, the Antichrist will launch a final attack on Jerusalem, culminating in the battle of Armageddon. Jesus Christ will return, destroy the Antichrist and his armies, and cast them into the lake of fire ([Revelation 19:11-21](#)). Christ will then bind Satan in the Abyss for 1000 years and He will rule His earthly kingdom for this thousand-year period ([Revelation 20:1-6](#)).

At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released, defeated again, and then cast into the lake of fire ([Revelation 20:7-10](#)) for eternity. Christ then judges all unbelievers ([Revelation 20:10-15](#)) at the great white throne judgment, casting them all into the lake of fire. Christ will then usher in a new heaven and new earth and the New Jerusalem—the eternal dwelling place of believers. There will be no more sin, sorrow, or death ([Revelation 21-22](#)).

Question: "What signs indicate that the end times are approaching?"

Answer: [Matthew 24:5-8](#) gives us some important clues so we can discern the approach of the end times, "For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 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. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places." An increase in false messiahs, an increase in warfare, and increases in famines, plagues, and natural disasters—these are signs of the end times. In this passage, though, we are given a warning: we are not to be

deceived, because these events are only the beginning of birth pains; the end is still to come.

Some interpreters point to every earthquake, every political upheaval, and every attack on Israel as a sure sign that the end times are rapidly approaching. While the events may signal the approach of the last days, they are not necessarily indicators that the end times have arrived. The apostle Paul warned that the last days would bring a marked increase in false teaching. “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” ([1 Timothy 4:1](#)). The last days are described as “perilous times” because of the increasingly evil character of man and people who actively **“resist the truth”** ([2 Timothy 3:1-9](#); see also [2 Thessalonians 2:3](#)).

Other possible signs would include a rebuilding of a Jewish temple in Jerusalem, increased hostility towards Israel, and advances toward a one-world government. The most prominent sign of the end times, however, is the nation of Israel. In 1948, Israel was recognized as a sovereign state, essentially for the first time since A.D. 70. God promised Abraham that his posterity would have Canaan as “an everlasting possession” ([Genesis 17:8](#)), and Ezekiel prophesied a physical and spiritual resuscitation of Israel (Ezekiel chapter 37). Having Israel as a nation in its own land is important in light of end times prophecy because of Israel’s prominence in eschatology ([Daniel 10:14](#); [11:41](#); [Revelation 11:8](#)).

With these signs in mind, we can be wise and discerning in regard to the expectation of the end times. We should not, however, interpret any of these singular events as a clear indication of the soon arrival of the end times. God has given us enough information that we can be prepared, and that is what we are called to be.

Question: "What is Israel's role in the end times?"

Answer: Every time there is an explosion of conflict in or around Israel, many see it as a sure sign of the quickly approaching end times. The problem with this is that it creates a “boy that cried wolf” syndrome. We may eventually tire of the conflict in Israel, so much so that we will not recognize when true prophetically significant events occur. Conflict in Israel is not necessarily a sign of the end times.

Conflict in Israel has been a reality whenever Israel has existed as a nation. Whether it was the Egyptians, Amalekites, Midianites, Moabites, Ammonites, Amorites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, or Romans, the nation of Israel has always been surrounded by and persecuted by its neighbors. Why is this? According to the Bible, it is because God has a special plan for the nation of Israel, and Satan wants to defeat that plan.

Satanically influenced hatred of Israel—and especially Israel’s God—is the reason Israel’s neighbors have always wanted to see Israel destroyed. Whether it is Sennacherib, king of Assyria; Haman, official of Persia; Hitler, leader of Nazi Germany; or Ahmadinejad, President of Iran, attempts to ultimately destroy Israel will always fail. The persecutors of Israel will come and go, but the persecution will remain until the second coming of Christ. As a result, conflict in Israel cannot be considered a reliable indicator of the soon arrival of the end times.

At the same time, there will be terrible conflict in Israel during the end times. That is why the time period is known as the Tribulation, the Great Tribulation, and the “time of Jacob’s trouble” ([Jeremiah 30:7](#)). Here is what the Bible does say about Israel in the end times:

There will be a mass return of Jews to the land of Israel ([Deuteronomy 30:3](#); [Isaiah 43:6](#); [Ezekiel 34:11-13](#); [36:24](#); [37:1-14](#)).

The Antichrist will make a 7-year covenant of "peace" with Israel ([Isaiah 28:18](#); [Daniel 9:27](#)).

The Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem ([Daniel 9:27](#); [Matthew 24:15](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:3-4](#); [Revelation 11:1](#)).

The Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, and worldwide persecution of Israel will result ([Daniel 9:27](#); [12:1](#), [11](#); [Zechariah 11:16](#); [Matthew 24:15](#), [21](#); [Revelation 12:13](#)). Israel will be invaded (Ezekiel chapters 38-39).

Israel will finally recognize Jesus as their Messiah ([Zechariah 12:10](#)). Israel will be regenerated, restored, and regathered ([Jeremiah 33:8](#); [Ezekiel 11:17](#); [Romans 11:26](#)).

There is much turmoil in Israel today. Israel is persecuted, surrounded by enemies—the Palestinians, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, etc. But this hatred and persecution of Israel is only a hint of what will happen in the end times ([Matthew 24:15-21](#)). The latest round of persecution began when Israel was reconstituted as a nation in 1948. Many Bible prophecy scholars believed the six-day Arab-Israeli war in 1967 was the "beginning of the end." Could what is taking place in Israel today indicate that the end is near? Yes. Does it necessarily mean the end is near? No. Jesus Himself said it best, "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 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" ([Matthew 24:4-6](#)).

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