

Introduction

There are a lot of people discussing end times events and questioning whether we are living in the last days. With the world facing numerous challenges, from natural disasters to global conflicts, it's no wonder that many are questioning whether we are on the brink of Armageddon as told in the Bible.

Many people are searching for answers and many others are conflating biblical prophecy and wild Hollywood stories as they grapple with these uncertain times that we are living in today. Thousands of years ago writers of the Bible were given specific revelation which have been passed down to us in the books of Revelation and Daniel. These books offer prophetic insights into the end times events, the Great Tribulation and the events leading up to the second coming of Christ.

The question is - are we witnessing the development of these things today? It's natural to ponder these prophecies and try to discern the signs of the times. We must resist the urge to hype what we see and draw conclusions that are not there, or worse - to panic. When probing these questions, it's essential that we approach this subject with humility, wisdom, and reliance on Scripture as our source for truth. While we may not have all the answers, we can find hope and guidance in God's Word in these uncertain times as in any other times past.

In this article, we'll take a closer look at what the Bible says about the end times and the tribulation is all about. We'll explore the signs that Jesus mentioned in His earthly ministry, consider how current events might relate to biblical prophecy, and discuss how we, as believers (and non-believers alike), should live in light of these prophetic teachings.

Understanding the Tribulation

The term "Tribulation" refers to a future period of severe suffering and chaos, as described in the biblical books of Revelation and Daniel. This period is distinct from the broader "end times," which encompass all events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ.

What is the Tribulation?

The Tribulation is a seven-year period divided into two phases: the initial phase, generally called "The Tribulation," and the second phase, known as "The Great Tribulation." Each phase lasts three and a half years and is characterized by intense calamities, upheavals in the social, political, and natural world, resulting in great strife. The latter phase is marked by increased intensity in disasters, suffering, and death. The book of Revelation describes the Tribulation as a time of unparalleled natural, supernatural, and human-made calamities, which are seen as judgments on the earth.

Tribulation vs. End Times

The “end times” typically refers to the period leading up to the Tribulation, the final battle, the return of Christ, and the culmination of His reign over the earth. It can be thought of as the overall culmination of history as prophesied in the Bible. The Tribulation specifically refers to a seven-year period of intense hardship that occurs during the end times, making it a subset of this broader period. Its significance lies in the marked turmoil and divine judgment God brings upon the earth during this time.

Purpose of the Tribulation

Understanding why God would allow such a time of turmoil is crucial. The Tribulation serves multiple divine purposes:

Judgment: One of the primary purposes of the Tribulation is to bring judgment upon a world that has turned away from God. It is a period when divine justice is meted out, not only to punish but also to reclaim the world from pervasive evil and corruption.



Redemption of God’s People: For the Jewish people, whom God calls His people, the Tribulation acts as a time of purification and redemption. God will use this time to make Himself known to the Jewish people and call them to Him.

Awakening: The Tribulation will serve as a wake-up call to many. The escalating trials and tribulations are meant to awaken the spiritually indifferent and offer a last chance for repentance. The Jewish nation will send out 144,000 evangelists who will spread the message of salvation and the world will see the greatest turning to God of any time since Christ's resurrection.

Demonstration of God's Power and Sovereignty: The ultimate triumph over evil and the restoration of peace and justice demonstrate God's power and sovereignty. The events of the Tribulation, though harsh, highlight God's unyielding commitment to righteousness and His supreme authority over all creation.

The Tribulation is more than a period of hardship; it is a divinely ordained time designed to bring about the fulfillment of God's plans for humanity. It involves judgment, purification, and ultimately, the restoration of a just and holy order. Understanding these purposes helps believers grasp the significance of this prophesied time and encourages them to live with perseverance and hope.

Signs Leading Up to the End Times

In Matthew 24, Jesus' disciples ask Him about the signs of His coming and the end of the age. He responds by outlining a series of events and conditions that will characterize the lead-up to His return. This passage in Matthew is crucial for understanding end times events (referred to as eschatology), as it connects the prophetic dots from Jesus' own words to our current global context.

1. False Christs and False Prophets

Jesus warns of the rise of false Christs and false prophets (vv. 4-5, 11, 23-26). These deceptive figures will lead many astray, leveraging miraculous signs and wonders to substantiate their claims. This emphasizes the need for discernment among believers, as these deceivers are predicted to be so convincing that they could potentially mislead even the elect, if that were possible.

2. Wars and Rumors of Wars

The mention of wars and rumors of wars (v. 6) is often cited in discussions about global conflict. Jesus instructs not to be alarmed by these events as they must occur, but they are not the immediate precursors to the end. This sign reflects the perpetual state of geopolitical unrest and serves as a reminder that conflict will be a persistent feature of the human condition until His return.

3. Famines, Pestilences, and Earthquakes

Natural disasters such as famines, pestilences, and earthquakes (v. 7) are described as part of the birth pains leading up to the end times. These phenomena, increasing in frequency and intensity, are meant to signal the approach of the end, reminding humanity of its vulnerability and the impermanence of the current world order.

4. Persecution of Believers

The persecution of believers (v. 9) is a significant sign, with Christians being hated by all nations because of Jesus' name. This persecution not only tests the faith of believers but also purifies and strengthens the church, underscoring the cost of discipleship in a world that rejects Christ.

5. Apostasy and Betrayal Within the Church

Jesus also predicts an increase in apostasy and betrayal within the church (vv. 10-12), where the love of most will grow cold due to the increase of wickedness. This chilling forecast points to a falling away from the faith, where external pressures and internal decay lead to weakened faithfulness among believers.

6. The Gospel Preached to All Nations

A more hopeful sign is the proclamation of the gospel to all nations (v. 14). This global evangelism effort signifies that despite the surrounding turmoil, the message of salvation will reach every corner of the earth, fulfilling God's redemptive plan for humanity before the end comes.

7. The Abomination of Desolation

The abomination of desolation (v. 15), a pivotal event, refers to an idolatrous offense set up in the holy place, as prophesied by Daniel. This act marks a significant escalation in sacrilegious activity, triggering severe persecution and serving as a clear sign for believers to seek safety.

8. Great Tribulation

The period known as the Great Tribulation (vv. 21-22) will be a time of unprecedented hardship, described as so severe that it would lead to the extinction of all life if not cut short by God. This will be a time of purification and decision, a final sifting of true believers from false ones.

9. Cosmic Disturbances

Lastly, cosmic disturbances (vv. 29-30) will herald the nearness of Christ's return. The darkening of the sun, the unsteadiness of the stars, and the shaking of heavenly powers will

dramatically signal the imminent arrival of the Lord, urging all to look up and prepare for redemption.



Remember the disciples were interesting in knowing when to expect Jesus's return, His second coming. The world must go through very traumatic events before that happens. The worst of these begins with verses 15 through 30 of Matthew 24 where God's judgement on the earth - the Tribulation - is metered out. Leading up to this are signs 1 through 6 detailed above. They are described as birth pains - the groaning of all creation as the end is coming near.

These are the signs that we are watching for to tell us that the end is near - just like the leaves on a fig tree as Jesus explains in verses 32&33:

"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. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door."

Each of these signs, while foreboding, serves a dual purpose: to warn and to prepare. Jesus concludes that these are the beginning of sorrows (v. 8) and stresses the importance of vigilance (vv. 42-44) as we wait. As we observe these signs unfolding, the call for Christians

is clear: to live faithfully, alert, and committed to sharing the gospel, anchored by the hope of His return.

Modern Conflicts: War in Israel and Ukraine

When we consider current events, such as the ongoing conflicts in Israel and Ukraine, it's natural to wonder if these are part of the prophetic timeline described in the Bible. While neither of these specific conflicts are explicitly mentioned in Scripture, they can still be seen as indicators of the turmoil and instability that Jesus warned about in Matthew 24.

In Luke 21:24, Jesus speaks of Jerusalem being trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. This suggests that conflict and tension in the region of Israel will be a recurring theme throughout history until Christ's return. The current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, along with the broader tensions in the Middle East, and the larger threat of Iran becoming involved could be seen as part of this ongoing struggle, or it could be one of the signs mentioned above.



Similarly, while the war in Ukraine is not directly mentioned in prophecy, it represents the

kind of “wars and rumors of wars” that Jesus said would characterize the end times. The global instability, shifting alliances, and potential for escalation that we see in this conflict are all reminders of the turbulent nature of the world leading up to Christ’s return.

We must be careful not to read too much into specific events or conflicts, attempting to fit them into a prophetic framework where they may not belong. However, we can view these situations as general signs of the times, recognizing that they point to the broader reality of a fallen world in need of redemption.

The Relevance of End Times Prophecy to Non-Believers

For those without a foundation in faith, the imagery and predictions of the end times as described in biblical prophecy can be unsettling, even frightening. This is especially true in a culture saturated with dramatic and often apocalyptic media portrayals. However, these biblical narratives are not just forewarnings of judgment; they are also messages of hope and invitation to salvation. Let us explore how non-believers can find comfort, hope, and a pathway to confidence in God’s promises during these challenging times.

Understanding the Message Beyond the Fear

The biblical portrayal of the end times isn’t merely about wrath and destruction; it’s fundamentally about the restoration of justice, the triumph of good over evil, and the hope of a renewed world. For those unfamiliar with Christian teachings, it’s important to clarify that the core message of the Bible is one of redemption and love, embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.

Comfort in the Promises of Scripture

For non-believers, the concept that the world is heading toward a definitive conclusion might seem like a narrative straight out of a blockbuster movie. However, these themes resonate deeply with the universal human desires for justice and peace. The Bible directly addresses these longings, not only acknowledging them but also providing a vision of a future where these aspirations are fully realized.

In the Psalms, we find verses that bring hope and promise in the face of the greatest troubles. For those willing to trust Him he gives reassurance such as that found in Psalm 27:1 which declares,

“The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?”

As we may want sheltered in times of great trial we are reminded in Psalm 91:1 -

“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.”

And finally as a beacon to those who are lost and in need of assurance, peace and the promise of God’s goodness in the end we have the poetic and beautiful 23rd psalm. It is a call to come and rest in his care and goodness where God promises:

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)

These promises from Psalms offer a glimpse into the heart of God who is calling the lost to come to Him for rest. This is most urgent now as we see and feel the fleeting nature of time running out as we see the chaos and conflicts we see in the world today. For those standing outside the faith looking in, these verses can serve as a beacon of hope. This perspective is meant to offer not only comfort but also a compelling invitation to explore the deeper truths found within the Christian faith.

Hope for Salvation

The end times narrative is not just a doom-filled prophecy but a call to redemption. It’s an invitation for all to come to faith. For non-believers, this can be a compelling invitation to explore the claims of Christianity. Consider John 3:16 -

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

as well as Romans 10:9-10 -

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”

These verses offer a direct pathway to this hope. It reassures us that salvation and eternal peace are freely offered to all who choose to believe, not just a select few.

Building Confidence in God’s Hands

For those worried about their fate in such tumultuous times, the Bible offers reassurances that can build confidence in God’s care. Psalm 46:1-2 says,

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.”

Such verses remind us that God is a sanctuary, a protector who is both willing and able to

carry individuals through the hardest times.

Steps Toward Faith

For non-believers feeling the tug of these truths but unsure how to proceed, the path starts with exploration and understanding:

Seek Knowledge: Start by reading the Bible or attending a church service to understand the Christian perspective on life, death, and eternal destiny.

Engage in Dialogue: Discussing your thoughts and fears with a believer can provide insights and personal stories of how faith in God has changed their perspective on death and the end times.

Pray for Insight: Even if unsure about prayer, expressing your thoughts and concerns openly can be a form of prayer, inviting God to make Himself known to you.

The Invitation Stands Open

Christianity posits that it's never too late to turn towards God. The message of the end times is not just a warning but a last, merciful call to salvation before the final changes of the age come to pass. It invites everyone to secure their place in a future where fear, pain, and death are no more.



We have some excellent resources at Approved to God to help you along this path and we are happy to recommend those of other respected faith leaders. Check these out:

- [Why Become a Christian](#)
- [How to Become a Christian](#)
- [What is the Gospel and Why It Matter](#)
- [How can I be saved](#) (From our friends at GotQuestions.com)

Christian Living in Anticipation of the End Times

What about those of us who claim the name of Christ? Knowing that we may be living in the end times, how should we, as Christians, conduct ourselves? The Bible provides clear guidance on this matter, emphasizing the importance of faith, hope, and love in the face of adversity.

In Luke 21:28, after describing the signs of the end times, Jesus tells His disciples, “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” This verse reminds us that even in the midst of chaos and uncertainty, we have a sure hope in Christ and His promise to return for His people.

The apostle Paul also offers encouragement for believers living in anticipation of the end times. In 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8, he writes,

“Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.”

Paul’s words underscore the need for vigilance, sobriety, and spiritual readiness as we await Christ’s return. He reminds us to clothe ourselves in faith, love, and hope—the very qualities that will sustain us through the trials and suffering that may accompany the beginning of the end times as Jesus described them.

We should be focused on how we are living and not on speculating on this or that event and how it might signal the beginning of the end. Every day we are one day closer. Other than that - we cannot know when the end will begin. As Jesus said in Matthew 24:36 -

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,^[4] but only the Father.”

With this in mind - in addition to remaining faithful and watchful, Christians should also be actively engaged in sharing the gospel and making disciples. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus states:

“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.”

This verse highlights the urgency of evangelism and missions, as the proclamation of the gospel is a key sign of the end times.

As we live in these uncertain times, it’s crucial that we remain grounded in God’s Word, committed to prayer, and actively involved in our local churches. By fostering a deep relationship with Christ and strong bonds within the body of believers, we will be better equipped to face the challenges of the end times with courage, wisdom, and unwavering faith.

Conclusion

The topic of the end times and the tribulation can be both fascinating and sobering for Christians. While we may not have all the answers or be able to pinpoint exactly where we are in the prophetic timeline, we can rest assured that God is sovereign and His plans will ultimately prevail.

In these uncertain times, let us seek wisdom and understanding from the Scriptures, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us in our interpretation and application of prophetic truths. May we live each day in the light of eternity, holding fast to our faith, and eagerly anticipating the glorious return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the words of the apostle John, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).