

End Times Overview

Key Verse

Revelation 1:3 — Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near. (NKJV)

Introduction

How many of you wish you had bought a bunch of Microsoft stock when it first went on the market? You would be extremely rich today—even with the recent market losses. Imagine if you could know what was going to happen in the future. You can—at least parts of it. God told us quite a bit about the end times in His Word—the Bible. And it's a lot easier to understand the Bible teachings about End Times than many people think.

Why is it Important to Know About End Times?

So you won't be shaken, deceived, or side-tracked by wrong teaching about end times.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 — Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

So you will help others because our time is short.

Hebrews 10:24-25 — And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Because Jesus said it was important to be alert.

Luke 21:31, 34-36 — So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. — “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

If it wasn't important, God would not have included it in the Bible. Duh!

Purpose of Prophecy

Before His birth, there were many prophecies about the coming Messiah (Jesus). Some prophecies described the Messiah coming to conquer and reign. Other prophecies described His suffering in payment for our sins. These messianic prophecies were studied intently by the Jews. Unfortunately, many did not understand that the prophecies spoke of two separate comings.

Jesus would first come as a **servant** to redeem man from sin (Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12). The second coming would be as a **king**, conquering all evil and delivering God's people (Jeremiah 23:5-6; Daniel 7:13-14). Unfortunately, many people only looked for the kingly Messiah whom they expected would deliver the Jewish people from the tyranny of Roman rule (Acts 1:6). Since the servant Messiah prophecies did not seem to fit this expectation, those prophecies were often ignored or misapplied.

As a result, when Jesus came the people thought that He was the kingly Messiah who would set up God's kingdom in Jerusalem. A few days before Passover, these people spread palm branches and clothes in the road to welcome their coming King (John 12:12-13). When Jesus failed to fulfill **their understanding** of the prophecies, these same people turned against Him, demanding His death (John 19:14-15).

The Jewish people made a common mistake when it comes to biblical prophecy. They thought that the primary purpose of prophecy was to describe what would happen in the future. They also added too many assumptions based upon their limited understanding of the prophecies. Even though the prophecies were fulfilled (to that point) exactly as given, many of the Jewish people did not recognize it because they were not fulfilled **the way they expected**. We must be careful to not make a similar mistake when studying End-Time prophecies.

Throughout the Bible, God has provided many End-Time prophecies for us. These prophecies serve two major purposes. First, when they come to pass, they assure us that God has everything under control (John 13:19; 14:29; 16:4). He is not surprised by the events taking place.

The second major purpose of these prophecies is to show us where we are in God's plan. For example, the Abomination of Desolation will show Christians when we are entering the Great Tribulation (Mat. 24:15,21). We will probably not know ahead of time when the Great Tribulation will start. However, when we see the Abomination of Desolation, we will know that the Great Tribulation has started.

When studying End-Time prophecies, avoid the temptation to be too specific about how the prophecies will be fulfilled. Primarily, seek to understand enough about the prophecies to recognize them when they come to pass. If you do that, you will be least likely to miss these important indicators provided by God. *Hold loosely to man's theories and firmly to Bible truth. Don't mistake the one for the other.*

Great Tribulation or Wrath of God?

To accurately understand end-time events you must get a clear understanding of the difference between the *Great Tribulation* and *Wrath of God*. Unless this difference is clearly understood, it is virtually impossible to accurately understand end-time events.

The Great Tribulation

An important clue to remember when studying end-time events is that the Great Tribulation is demonic in origin. It includes the persecution and killing of many people by Satan's representative—the Beast. The Beast (also called the Antichrist) will reign during the Great Tribulation. He will demand worship and conquer many countries. The Great Tribulation will be a time of intense evil. The source of the Great Tribulation is Satan.

Revelation 13:2-4 — Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who

gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

Satan's purpose for the Great Tribulation is to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). A major characteristic of the Great Tribulation is the deception of those who do not love the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 — The coming of the *lawless one* [the Beast] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

 **Who is the source (cause) of the Great Tribulation?**

The Wrath of God

The Wrath of God is godly judgment **against** evil. This judgment takes the form of seven plagues poured out against the Beast and those who worship him. These seven plagues are poured out by the angels of God. The purpose of the Wrath of God is to punish the Beast and his followers.

Revelation 14:9-10 — Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

The major characteristic of the Wrath of God is severe punishment of those who do not belong to God.

Revelation 16:1-2 — Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

 **Who is the source (cause) of the Wrath of God?**

The Difference

The Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God are **two separate** events coming from **two different** sources for **two different** purposes at **two different** times. The Great Tribulation is a time of intense **persecution**. It is instigated by Satan through the Beast in an effort to deceive people and cause them to worship him instead of Jesus. The Wrath of God is a time of **judgment** which will be poured out upon the world by God. Its purpose is to punish the Beast and those who have taken his mark during

the Great Tribulation. The Wrath of God occurs immediately after the Great Tribulation. So when does Jesus come to rescue us from this mess?

The “Rapture”

When Jesus returns, He will gather His sons and daughters, taking them to be with Him forever. This is sometimes called the “Rapture” of the church. The word *rapture* (ecstasy, delight, joy) is not in the Bible, but the event is described in several places.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 — For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Matthew 24:30-31 — Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect [chosen ones] from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

There are many people who teach that the Rapture takes place in two parts. They teach that the Christians are secretly taken out of the earth by Jesus just before the Great Tribulation. Christians will just disappear one day. People who become Christians after that have to suffer intense persecution from the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. Later, when Jesus returns to put an end to the Antichrist, he will take those people who became Christians during the Great Tribulation. This does not agree with the Bible!

The Rapture is Not Secret or Hidden

First of all, the Bible is very clear that the “Rapture” (gathering of the saints) is not a secret or hidden event.

Matthew 24:23, 26-27, 30-31 — “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe *it*. — “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; *or* ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe *it*. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. — Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Revelation 1:7 — Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Revelation 6:15-17 — And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Not a Partial Rapture

The Bible also does not teach a partial Rapture. All those who belong to the Lord are taken to be with Him when He comes. (See verses above.)

The return of Jesus and the gathering of his people (called the Rapture) signals the end of the Great Tribulation and the beginning of the outpouring of God's Wrath. The Rapture is a transition event between these two important time periods.

Matthew 24:29-31 — “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Revelation 6:12-17 — I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

The Wrath of God is a time of punishment from God against the Antichrist and those who have rejected Jesus (Rev 14:9-11). No one repents and turns to God during the Wrath of God.

Revelation 9:20-21 — But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Revelation 16:9-11 — And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

Since no one repents during the Wrath of God, there will be no new Christians to gather at the end of the Wrath of God. So there will not be a second rapture.

End Times Overview

Now that we understand the distinction between the Great Tribulation and the Wrath of God, let's see how those events fit into the End Times as described in the Bible.

First, A Time of Relative Peace

Before the end, there will be a time of relative peace. There will still be wars and rumors of war. There will also be serious environmental problems. We are probably in that time right now.

Matthew 24:6-8 — And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

Time of Violence and Persecution

At the beginning of the End Times, a strong, anti-Jesus and anti-Christian ruler will gain power. The Bible calls him the *Beast* and the *Antichrist*. He could be very religious or an atheist. He may even appear to be a Christian at the beginning. He will conquer countries and kill those who oppose Him. His rule will be widespread, but not 100%.

Revelation 13:1-8 — ... I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. The dragon [Satan] gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

In the Bible, this time is called the *Great Tribulation*.

Matthew 24:9-22 — "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 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. "... For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

The Great Tribulation will last 3 ½ years.

Revelation 13:5 — And he [the Beast] was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

Enough is Enough!

Jesus will return to bring an end to the rule of this Beast and judgment upon those who follow the Beast. At that time, Jesus will rescue His own people (the Rapture, 1 Thessalonians. 4:16-17).

Matthew 24:29-31 — “Immediately after the tribulation of those days ... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

This understanding is often called the “Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church.” This agrees with the Bible that Jesus takes His people out of the world after the Great Tribulation but before the Wrath of God. (The popular “Pre-Trib Rapture” view of End Times teaches that we will be taken out before the Great Tribulation—but that disagrees with the Bible.)

After His people are rescued, God will punish the Beast and those who serve him. Like the Egyptian plagues on steroids, God will pour out seven extreme plagues. The Bible call this outpouring of God’s anger and punishment the *Wrath of God*.

Revelation 14:9-10 — Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation.”

Revelation 15:1 — Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

God will not pour out the plagues of His wrath—His judgment—against Christians.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 — For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

After the Plagues of God’s Wrath

After the end of God’s Wrath when the last of the seven plagues is finished, there will be 1,000 years of relative paradise on earth—often called the *Millennium*. The devil will be imprisoned so he cannot tempt or harass anyone during the 1,000 years. Jesus and those who belong to Him will rule and reign in Jerusalem. Non-Christians who survive the punishment of the seven plagues will live outside of Jerusalem.

Revelation 20:1-4 — ... an angel ... laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I* saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

After the 1,000 years are finished, the devil will be released once again. Satan will tempt those who do not belong to God into rebelling against Jesus. It won’t be much of a rebellion for who can stand against God’s might?

Revelation 20:7-9 — Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

Satan will then be thrown into the Lake of Fire where he will be tormented for all eternity.

Revelation 20:10 — The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Final Judgment

The earth and the whole universe will cease to exist, and this creation will come to an end. Then, the final judgment will take place with God sitting on a Great White Throne. Everyone who does not belong to God will be brought before Him and that person's works will be judged. Since everyone is guilty of breaking God's laws, each will be found guilty as a law breaker.

Next, the *Book of Life* will be consulted. This book contains the names of everyone who has made Jesus their Lord and Savior and accepted Jesus' payment for his or her sins.

If the person's name is not recorded in the *Book of Life*, that means that he or she refused to accept God's offer of payment through Jesus in exchange for his or her life. That person will then have to pay the penalties himself or herself in the Lake of Fire where Satan is being tormented.

Revelation 20:11-15 — Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

New Universe, Earth, and Jerusalem

After the final judgment, God will make a new creation. This new creation will include a new universe, a new planet earth, and a special new city called the New Jerusalem. Jesus, the Father, and all those who belong to God will live there forever. There will be no sin, sickness, or sorrow.

Revelation 21:1-4 — Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Conclusion — What difference should it make in your life?

Be sure you are ready

There is coming a separation of those who belong to God from those who do not. It is like separating sheep from goats. They are similar types of animals, but there are

significant differences. While all humans were created by God, not all of them belong to Him as His sons and daughters.

Matthew 25:32-34 — All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

To be ready you must make sure that you belong to God. That is done only by accepting Jesus’ payment for your sin and receiving His lordship in your life.

Romans 10:8-9, 13 — But what does it say? *“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”* (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. — For *“whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

Limited time so get busy

You must also realize that you have only a limited time to reach those around you who do not yet belong to Jesus. Whether we die first, or Jesus comes today, the time each of us has left is very short. We need to be busy learning about and doing the Father’s business as good servants dispensing the things He has entrusted to us..

Matthew 24:45-51 — “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Don’t allow the cares and distractions of life to make you unfruitful in God’s work.

Mark 4:18-19 — Now these [seeds] are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Don’t Fear

A feeling of urgency is good when it comes to thinking about the future. To be fearful is not good—unless you do not belong to Jesus. Then you should fear greatly! If you belong to Jesus and follow Him, you can know that fear does not come from Him.

2 Timothy 1:7 — For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

God will give you each day what you need for that day. But He won’t always give you today what you will need for tomorrow.

Matthew 6:31-34 — “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall

be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

Hebrews 13:5 — Let your conduct *be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*”

Watch and be strong

Trust in God rather than in your possessions or your own abilities. Be watchful and attentive to the things of God.

Ephesians 6:10 — Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Mark 13:35-37 — Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

Insider’s Tip for Investment

Be careful not to invest too much in the kingdom of this world. This world and its treasures are going down in flames! It will be the worst crash of all time. Remind yourself of the popular saying during the Jesus Movement of the 70’s: “It’s all gonna burn!”

2 Peter 3:10-13 — But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* 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 dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Invest heavily in God’s Kingdom! It’s going to go through the roof so put everything you have into it. We’re not talking just about money, but your time, talents, skills, and other resources.

Hebrews 10:34-35 — for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

Invest wisely and you will be set for life—eternal life!