

## End Times (Eschatology)

### END TIMES

"The harvest is the end of the world." (Matthew 13:39) Unfortunately that is a faulty translation. What Jesus actually said in this parable is, "The harvest is the end of the age." His point, and ours also, is that we are to look for an age to end, not the end of life on earth!

When we study "end-time" prophecy in the Bible, we quickly learn that it has no resemblance to the sensational fantasies that have come out of dark-ages theology. Unfortunately, those concepts are tenacious enough to retain adherents in our day. Modern series of books and movies implant fears of being lost, left behind, etc. — all fairy-tales (or demon-tales!) which play on superstitions and residual fears of this poor tormented world in which we live. Pompous apostate Christianity loves to gloat as to how it is favored, will be saved, and will somehow be satisfied as the rest of unbelieving mankind is lost. Blasphemy!

Contrary to these lies about the end of time, the destruction of the earth, etc., are the reassuring words of prophecy: "The earth abideth forever;" "The meek shall inherit the earth;" "The earth shall yield her increase;" "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet; they break forth into singing;" "The government shall be upon his shoulder; ...of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end;" "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;" "The earth is my footstool...and I will make the place of my feet glorious;" "God himself...formed the earth and made it; he hath established it; he created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited;" "Thy will be done in earth." This list only samples the hundreds which make the point: the earth will be a glorious place forever! (Ecclesiastes 1:4; Matthew 5:5; Psalm 67:6; Isaiah 14:7; Isaiah 9:6, 7; Isaiah 11:9; Isaiah 66:1 and 60:13; Isaiah 45:18; Matthew 6:10)

So, what is meant by "the end of the world"? There is no denying that prophecy makes many references to such things as "the time of the end," "He that shall endure unto the end," "The day of the Lord...in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up," "The first heaven and the first earth were passed away." (Daniel 11:40; Matthew 24:13; II Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1)

The fact is that the Bible is full of symbolisms. Learning to distinguish between plain, literal statements and highly figurative language is a time-consuming and prayerful endeavor. But it can be done successfully with satisfying, reasonable results. (We recommend "How To Study the Bible and Have It Make Sense"—available through this website.) Anyone with impartial reasoning capabilities can see that the Bible would be a self-contradictory book of confusions if we took it all

as literal statement. Once we discern its symbolism secrets, however, it becomes a very reasonable teacher of what is to come.

When the First World War broke out, President Woodrow Wilson exclaimed that "The World is on fire!" Everyone knew what he meant. When the Apostle Peter prophesied the same events with the same words, somehow no one seems to know what he means! The Lord has blinded the eyes of mankind so that they cannot see until it is His time for them to see. (John 12:37-40)

## **A SUMMARY**

To shorten and simplify the Biblical testimony about "end-times," it is important to realize a few basic concepts:

1. End-time prophecy is not about the end of the physical earth or the end of time.
2. End-time prophecy deals with the TRANSITION PERIOD between the previous 6000 years of suffering, sin, and death and the incoming age of righteousness, life, and happiness.
3. What WILL END is the dying process in mankind as well as the old, selfish, corrupt social-political-ecclesiastical systems of doing things.
4. What WILL BEGIN is Christ's Kingdom of righteousness which will allow the earth to supply all of man's needs, desires, and comforts for life everlasting.
5. This transition also will mark the end of the development of Jesus' church who will all be raised as spirit beings to be with him as the new heavenly government for earth. It also will mark the beginning of the raising from the dead of all of the rest of humanity to enjoy the earth for which they were created.

## **CATEGORIES OF PROPHECY**

End-time prophecies deal primarily with four groups:

1. The nation of Israel (symbolized as a fig tree or as Jacob). See Doctrinal Kernel on **ISRAEL**.
2. The Apostate Christian Church (symbolized as Babylon, a harlot, a false prophet, tares, the vine of the earth, the heavens, etc.) See Doctrinal Kernel on [MAN OF SIN](#) and May 2008 Article of the Month on [WHEAT AND TARES](#).

3. The True Christian Church (symbolized as the first-born, wise and foolish virgins, a bride, the New Jerusalem, wheat, etc.) See May 2008 Article of the Month on [WHEAT AND TARES](#).
4. The Social and Political Systems — particularly of the Western World (symbolized as the dragon, the earth, the devil, etc.) See October 2008 Article of the Month on [FINANCIAL CRISIS](#).

## TIME

It also is helpful to realize that Biblical prophecies of end-times span a large amount of time. The period which Daniel 11 calls "The Time of the End" began, according to Daniel's prophetic chronology, in 1799. Since then, a number of significant Biblical dates have come, each marking the beginning of a new phase of end-time events. The "harvest" (of which Jesus spoke in the text at the head of this article) began in 1874. The beginning of Christ's thief-like parousia also begins at this date. (See article on [LORD'S RETURN](#).) Prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel to its homeland date from 1878. (See article on [ISRAEL](#).) What Jesus calls the end of "The Times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) came in 1914. History since that point has been heavy with fulfillments of various prophecies.

It probably also is important here to note that we do not subscribe to the end-time theories of the seven years of tribulation involving the "rapture" and man-of-sin prophecies. To our understanding, those presentations are spectacular corruptions of prophecies of Daniel, Thessalonians, and Revelation.