

THE END TIMES - *Top 10 List* - Matthew 24:36-44

What do we believe about the end times, tribulation, and prophecies that have not been fulfilled?

Some terms used in reference to future Biblical events.

Eschatology - Study of “the last things,” or future events.

Rapture - The “taking up” or snatching up of believers to be with Christ when he returns to the earth.

Millennium -A term that refers to the period of 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20:4-5 as the time of the reign of Christ and believers over the earth.

Second Coming of Christ - The sudden, personal, visible bodily return of Christ from heaven to earth.¹

***BIG POINT** - While there are a myriad of diverse interpretations of prophecies and predictions of these events, Christians are unified on the what but have differing opinions on the how.

- Therefore, it is our conviction that the “what” is a closed handed issue, but view of the “how” are open handed.
- We should hold our views of the theories of beginnings and the end loosely.

Key truths about the end times held by all Christians.

1. The core message of the second coming of Jesus and the end times is that it will happen, be ready. Every passage dealing with end times prophecy has its focus on this central message. The Bible gives a lot of images and predictions, but all of those are designed to challenge the people of God to be ready for the day when it all happens. (Matthew 24:36-51)

2. God is in control of all of history, and is outside of time. He is sovereign, fully aware of the end, and will bring His purposes to their climax. (Revelation 1:8, Revelation 4-5, Acts 17:25-31)

3. God will judge sin. No act of rebellion and treason against the eternal, righteous God will go unpunished. The Bible speaks of six different judgments:

- The judgment on sin - God sending judgement to deal with the sin in people on this earth. An example of this is God raising up the Babylonian Empire for the purpose of conquering the Hebrew people and taking them into exile (See the books of Jeremiah & Daniel)
- The judgment at death - **Hebrews 9:27**

¹All of these definitions come from the book *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem, published by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI: 1994.

- The judgment of the nations - separation of the sheep and the goats - Matthew 25:31-33
- The judgment of the believer's sin - **II Corinthians 5:21**
- The judgment of the bema seat - **II Corinthians 5:9-10**
- The judgement of the Great White Throne - Revelation 20:11-15

4. Jesus Christ is coming again, to gather His eternal church and bring judgment to the earth. No one knows when this will take place (Matthew 24:36), but all Christ-followers should look forward with eager expectation. This return of Christ will be a visible, bodily return (Acts 1:11). Followers of Jesus are commanded to live in the reality that the return of Jesus could happen at any moment.

5. Followers of Jesus will have a physical resurrection from the dead, having their spirits and bodies reunited for all of eternity (1 Corinthians 15, 1 John 3:1-3).

6. Heaven and hell are real places. Heaven is a place of eternal blessing for those who have trusted in Christ (John 14:1-6, Revelation 4-5, 7:9-17, 21-22). The greatest joy of heaven will be the real, eternal presence of God bringing the final deliverance from the very presence of sin (Revelation 21:22-26). Hell on the other hand is a real place of eternal torment and judgement. Hell is a just response from God to those who have willfully rejected His grace. (Luke 6:19-31, Matthew 10:28, 25:41-46, Revelation 20:11-15)

7. Jesus Christ will reign for all of eternity! His Kingdom is a reality now, but will come to fulfillment at the end of time. This includes the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, which represents the return of creation to the original state before the Fall. (Revelation 22:3, Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:13).

Some applications

***The end will come in one of two ways - death or the return of Jesus. Are you ready?**

ILLUS - Aunt Sue and her death

- Live with readiness - if the message of the second coming is to be ready, then we need to live our lives in a way that we are ready for Jesus to return tonight, while preparing as if he will not return in our lifetime.
- Live with eagerness - Multiple passages remind us that we should live this life with that life in view.
- Live with hope - The Bible continually presents the message of the end times as an encouragement for endurance when hardship and persecution arise. Books like Revelation and 1 Peter were written to churches in these times. Paul says that we should encourage one another with the message of the Day of the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:13-17)
- Live with passion - The impending and immediate return of Jesus as well as the message of judgement has long been a motivation for the church to live her mission (Acts 1:11).
- Live with worship -

“He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”