

Beliefs Concerning the End Times

- x We are in the End Days!
- x Antichrist is coming!
- x When the Gospel is preached to every person, Christ's will come.
- x The Millennium

We Are In The End Days!

Every time an earthquake or other catastrophe strikes, Americans think they are in the End Times. It doesn't matter that ten thousand quakes rock the planet every month, it is only the ones in the USA that chime the End Time warning.

Preachers throughout the past 500 years have always shouted this call to arms, deducing that the times they were living in were so bad, they just *had* to be near the end times. “It just can't get any worse!” Yet the Bible gives very little information on the end times. Russell Boatman, who wrote *The End Time*, said the following:

What would it take to set forth what the Bible says about the end-time? Actually not much, in terms of time and space. The Bible does not have a great deal to say about it...What would it take to set forth what people have been *led to believe the Bible has to say about the end-time?* (Italics mine) Ah, that is another question. That would require volumes. One book would not suffice.¹

The dissertation Jesus gave in Matthew 24 concerning the end times referred not to a distant future, but to Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD. He told His disciples, “this generation—you guys standing here—will certainly not die until *all these things have happened.*” (Matt 24:34) In another place, He said, “Truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel *until the Son of Man comes.*” (Matt 10:23) Looking at the context, our Lord is speaking of what many believe to be the Second Coming. Yet He clearly said that this event would actually take place in the apostles' lifetime! Jesus was speaking of the coming destruction of the Jewish economy and their city, which took place in 70 AD.

For nearly 1,800 years, most Christians never thought of a coming Antichrist, 7-year tribulation, nor a thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth as we see it today. But it started when John Darby began teaching dispensationalism² in the early 1800s. Church pulpits began to reflect and spread these new teachings. For example, the “rapture” (as it is popularly known today) was invented by Margaret McDonald, who had “visions and hallucinations” while suffering a near-death fever. John Darby met with Mrs. McDonald, became enthralled with her visions, and brought them to England.

The problem with all of this, is not so much what is being taught, but that it keeps people focused on the fantastic instead of Jesus Christ and His salvation. Proof of this can be seen in countless books and movies depicting the end of the world. Most of what they portray is pure speculation and contradicts the Bible. I can't tell you how many people

¹ *The End Time*, published by College Press Publishing Company, Joplin Missouri; © 1980

² Darby's conclusions that history is divided into distinct epochs or dispensations.

I've tried preaching to who wanted to speculate about the End Times.

Many ignore Jesus' own words on this issue:

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (Luke 17:26 – 30)

So the “end days” are going to be like what happened during Noah's and Lot's time. Did babies and other innocents perish in the Great Flood? Sure did. However, many believe that when the rapture comes, all babies will be taken up along with the church. This doesn't square with the Bible.

The book of Revelation was written to 1st-Century Christians and is heavily laced with Jewish symbolism and references. Its design was to provide comfort to those in that time of horrible persecution, not titillate modern-day Americans, who think they have an integral part in God's future plans.

Antichrist Is Coming!

The word *antichrist* only appears in 1st John. It is not in the book of Revelation, as so many believe. A casual reading of the text shows that antichrist is an attitude, not a person. Note:

Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. (2 John 7)

Thus, anyone can be the antichrist. It's not one *person*; it's an *attitude* of rejecting Jesus Christ.

Joseph Goebbels once said, "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it." This is especially true for those who don't study their Bibles. The primacy of print³ found in pop-culture books sways people away from what is true.

The notion of a future world leader is one of the hottest topics going today. Hundreds of books, thousands of preachers, millions of believers, and billions of Google hits all attest that the Antichrist is coming. To take a verse out of context, let's look at what Jesus said:

Of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. (Mark 13:32)

So no one knows when the end of the world comes except God; not even Jesus Christ knows. If that's true, how can Satan know? You see, Satan *has* to know, since he's the one who is supposed to be behind the antichrist, giving him his power.

To get around this conundrum, denominational preachers have latched onto a new theory to support the antichrist doctrine, namely, that Satan "always has a man ready on a moment's notice, to take over the world." They claim that when the rapture happens, Satan will then quickly install his man on his throne to begin the 7-year tribulation. But since Satan doesn't know when the rapture will happen, he always maintains a couple of candidates somewhere in the world, ready at a moment's notice. This is all fanciful rubbish that finds no support whatsoever in scripture. Unfortunately, most folks refuse to see things correctly.

When The Gospel Is Preached To Every Person, Christ Will Come

³ means, if something is printed on paper, especially a book, it must be true.

Before I embark on this, allow me to clarify my stance on mission work: *it is necessary*. I'm not against sending folks out to preach the Gospel. I'm countering a belief that has risen from the practice.

Christian denominations are traipsing through the darkest jungles of the earth, running into each other, trying to reach every person with the message of salvation so that Christ will come. The belief is that when every person has finally heard the Gospel, the Second Coming of Christ will take place. It's based on this verse:

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt 24:14)

Folks in those days understood “world” to mean “land,” specifically, the land of Judah. That was, for all intents and purposes, their world. The concept of a planet was essentially unknown. If a meteor wiped out America, our “world” would come to an end. The rest of the planet could be in good shape, but we, as a nation, will have ceased to exist. Our world would be gone.

The term, “whole world” is used by scripture to mean, the *known* world. John's exhortation to not love the world (1 John 2:15) does not mean “do not love the planet.” Jesus was referring to the destruction of the Jewish economy, not the end of the earth. Here's an OT verse that should illustrate this important rule of context:

I will bring distress on men...all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth. (Zeph 1:17-18)

Sounds like the end of the world, doesn't it? However, verse 4 clarifies that Judah and Jerusalem are the objects of this promise, not the planet. Matthew 24 and its sister chapters, Mark 13 and Luke 21, clearly refer to Jerusalem, not the world.

Paul wrote to the Colossians about “the hope of the gospel that you have heard, *which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven*, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.” (Col 1:23) “Was proclaimed...” implies that the Great Commission had been fulfilled. Paul had spread the seed and the Gospel continued to spread. Unfortunately, many good preachers refuse to accept this.

At the end of Paul's life, he told Timothy, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim 4:7) Most interpret the apostle's words to mean, “I've been a good Christian and never missed a church service.” In truth, he was referring to his commission by Christ to preach to the Gentiles. That had been the “good

fight.” The course had been completed.

A cursory study of the Bible shows that "all" doesn't always mean "all." For example, Mark 1:5 says John the Baptist baptized every one in Jerusalem and Judah. Did he literally baptize every man, woman, and child in the land? It merely means that John the Baptist was like Billy Graham—everyone knew him. He was the most widely known person, not to mention the only legitimate prophet, living at that time. There are many instances where the Bible uses "all" in a generic sense, not a literal one. The problem is, we tend to pick and choose which verses fit nicely into our beliefs.

When will Christ come? Certainly not when we force His hand by trying to convert everyone. I think the better answer is when mankind across the globe has totally rejected the salvation found in Christ, He will most likely drop the curtain. When Christianity will have all but been wiped off the planet. But as long as people are hungry for the Word, it won't happen. God wishes all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

Do not look only at America, thinking the End is upon us. While our country has fallen into decadence and violence, there are people thirsty for the Gospel in other countries. Do you really think Christ is going to come as long as millions around the world are being converted?

I think not.

The Millennium

The word “millennium” is nowhere found in scripture. It is based on a blatant misunderstanding of Revelation 20. A few good Bible studies would put away a lot of garbage folks have bought into concerning the so-called thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth.

Is there going to be a thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth? Forget momentarily about the rival systems of pre- and post-millennialism. There is a simple verse that reveals a concept that undermines both. Jesus said,

“No one puts new wine into old wineskins: otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins: but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”
(Mark 2:22)

Now picture this old earth, with its plague of sin blanketing it, as an old wineskin. Is Jesus really going to take it over and attempt to remake it anew? Patch up its tears and holes? Is he really going to assume a throne in Jerusalem and solve age-old enmities? While many will argue that “Christ can do whatever he wants,” the Bible is quite clear:

Then I saw a **new** heaven and a **new** earth, for the first heaven and the first earth **had passed away**. (Rev 21:1)

I don't know about you, but I certainly don't want to be in my new body, walking the streets of this world. If Jesus Christ did indeed sit on a throne in Jerusalem, there would be riots, murders, wars, and attempted nuclear strikes on that city.

No thanks.

Hit Reset.

New Heavens.

New Earth.