

So when will the end of the age come and what happens next?

Despite all these terrible signs, the majority of mankind will still not repent and turn to the Living God (Revelation 9v20-21, 16v11).

The final end of the age is referred to as the 'Day of the Lord' when Jesus Christ (the 'Son of Man') will return in judgement, and the destruction of the earth will occur (Isaiah 2v6-22, 13v6-13, 24v1-23, 51v6; Joel 2v1-11, 2v18-20; Zephaniah 1v2-3, 1v14-18, 3v6-8; Matthew 12v36, 13v24-42, 24v30-31, 25v31-46; Luke 17v20-37, 21v27; 1 Thessalonians 4v13-18, 2 Thessalonians 2v1-12; 2 Peter 3v3-10; Revelation 19v11-16). No one knows when this will happen; the Day of the Lord will come like a 'thief in the night' (Matthew 24v36, 24v42-44; 1 Thessalonians 5v1-6). Hence I have not attempted to define the precise train of events leading to this, rather pointing to 'signs along the way'.

After this there will be a 'new heaven and a new earth' (Isaiah 65v17-25, 66v22-24; Revelation 21v1-4). At some point Jerusalem/Israel will be restored, with all nations looking up to her, and there will be peace on earth (Micah 4v1-4; Isaiah 2v1-5, 11v6-16, 14v1-2, 19, 24v23, 54v9-15, 60v1-22; Jeremiah 32v35-37, 33v25-26; Amos 9v14-15; Zechariah 14v16-21; Revelation 21v10 - 22v5)¹.

Notes and Conclusion

The Bible verses quoted in this guide are the majority of passages associated with the end of the world which I have found in searching through the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament², with one exception - Daniel.

The book of Daniel is thought to have been completed around 530 BC, shortly after the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in 539. It contains vivid images of four great beasts, representing four kingdoms - these appear to be the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires (chapters 7-12). Since these have already come to pass I have not quoted verses on them. However the 'time of the end' (8v18) and the 'distant future' (8v26) are referred to, and there is the inference that some of the prophecy applies to the end of the world (7v9-28). The fourth beast, as well as being the Roman empire, also seems to represent the final world dictator. I have not attempted to untangle the 'end time' parts of the prophecy from those concerning the original empires.

Some Bible passages talk of the 'Antichrist' (1 John 2v18-22, 4v3; 2 John 1v7) and the 'man of lawlessness' (2 Thessalonians 2v3-12); these references appear to indicate the same person, or type of person, referred to in Daniel and Revelation as the 'beast'.

I suggest this guide is used to understand the signs as they happen and be encouraged/warned accordingly, rather than speculating when prophesied events will occur - especially the 'Rapture' (Christians supernaturally taken up from the earth: Matthew 24v39-41; Luke 17v34-35; 1 Thessalonians 4v16-17) and the 'Millennium' (Revelation 20), since the timing of these is not clear.

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¹ There are various interpretations which attempt to reconcile the creation of a 'new heaven and a new earth' with Jerusalem/Israel being restored, apparently in the context of this current world.

² I.e. from Isaiah to Malachi and Matthew to Revelation.

Handy Guide to The End of the World

Introduction

This has been produced to give a concise, simple explanation of events leading up to the end of this age¹. It is entirely based on prophecy in the Bible² - only time will tell whether this is supernaturally inspired or the product of men's imagination - and is a personal but straightforward reading of those prophesies. However, if you read on, you can't say you haven't been warned!

As I see it, the main two purposes of (Biblical) prophecy are:

- To challenge people that disobedience to God has consequences for individuals, communities and countries, including judgement
- To encourage those who live in an obedient relationship with God, that he has control of history and will love and sustain them through the trouble.

This guide takes a relatively simple view³ of what will happen between now and the end: prophesied trends and events will occur, signs will become more obvious, there will be terrible persecution of Christians, then the Messiah⁴ will come back in glory and judgement. Jesus Christ himself put it like this:

*"All these [events] are the beginning of birth pains."*⁵

Like a woman in labour, although there will be periods of relative calm in history, the 'contractions' will get stronger and stronger until the 'birth'.

Jesus also said about reading the signs of the end of the age and his return:

*"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."*⁶

Around a quarter of the Bible contains predictions about future events, of which many have already come to pass⁷. When world events happen which seem frightening or perplexing, you can interpret them in the light of the Bible and see God's purpose being worked out through history.

I hope you find this guide helpful. *David Orme* June 2007

¹ The 'end of this age' may or may not coincide with the 'end of the world' - however it will certainly represent a 'wrapping up' of history... more on this later.

² The Bible is made up of two parts: the Old Testament, containing the Hebrew scriptures (including the Torah and Prophets) written hundreds of years BC, and the New Testament - containing Greek writings by Christians in the 1st century AD. This guide quotes the New International Version (NIV) Bible, a modern English translation (see www.ubs.org/niv); if you wish cross-check verses with the 1611 King James version (e.g. www.hti.umich.edu/k/kjv) or others.

³ I have aimed to avoid interpreting the Bible against contemporary history - such as not suggesting Russia as the 'king of the North' or the EU as the 'ten kings' ruling with the Antichrist.

⁴ From ancient prophecy the Jews expected a messiah. Jesus 'Christ' (Greek for messiah) fulfilled many of those prophesies 2000 years ago (and the New Testament makes it clear he will return) - however only a small proportion of Jews accepted him as the Messiah.

⁵ Matthew 24v32 (i.e. from the Bible - the book of Matthew chapter 24, verse 32).

⁶ Matthew 25v8; see also Luke12v54-56 and Luke21v29-31.

⁷ Including the Jews returning to Israel last century, from being scattered across the globe. ①

Summary of signs leading up to the end of the age

Around 30 AD Jesus' disciples asked him when the Jewish temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed¹ and what the signs of the 'end of the age' would be (they probably assumed the two events would happen together). Jesus' reply to the latter question includes the following²:

"Watch out that no one deceives you. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come...

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time...

Immediately after the distress of those days:

*'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'*³

At that time the sign of the Son of Man⁴ will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

Using this as a basic framework, the next section of this guide refers to some of the many prophetic passages in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, relating them to signs, events and trends in world history as we approach the 'end of the age'.

Much of the nature of prophecy is to be ambiguous, and prophecies can refer to both near and distant future events in the same description. There is a rich use of metaphors - people, animals, places and events can be used as pictures for something else. For example, 'Jerusalem' and 'Babylon' are used in some passages to represent God's kingdom and the powers of this world, respectively. Making sense of the detail of prophetic passages in the Bible verses can be like piecing together a complex jigsaw. Nevertheless the main themes come through loud and clear.

¹ This subsequently occurred in 70 AD.

² Selected verses from Matthew 24. Mark 13 and Luke 21 contain similar words and hence are not referenced later, other than by exception.

³ Isaiah 13v10 and 34v4, as quoted by Jesus.

⁴ A term Jesus used to refer to himself.

Specific signs, events and trends

Political / Social

- Increase in wars, civil wars, and a world-wide lack of peace (Matthew 24v6-7; Luke 21v10; Revelation 6v1-4, 9v15-19, 16v12-16)
- Nations in great perplexity and fear (Isaiah 8v12-13, 13v68; Luke 21v26; Revelation 6v15-17)
- Moral collapse of society (2 Timothy 3v1-5)
- World dictator (literally 'the beast' - see Notes section overleaf) offering peace and security in return for total control, including people being 'marked' on their right hand or forehead in order to buy or sell (Revelation 13v1-7, 13v16-17)
- Collapse of the world's trading system and wealth as 'Babylon' burns (Revelation 18v1-24)
- Israel pivotal to history, surviving despite powerful nations raged against her, due to God's protection (Isaiah 46v3-4, 49v14-16; Ezekiel 38 & 39; Zechariah 2v8, 12v1-9, 14v1-13; Joel 3v16-21; Revelation 20v7-9).

Religious

- God pours out his Spirit on all people (Joel 2 v28-29)
- Growth in false prophets and messiahs (Matthew 24v4-5, 24v23-25)
- Many Christians lose their love of God (Matthew 24v10-13; 1 Timothy 4v1)
- Christianity is preached to all nations and languages (Matthew 24v14)
- Christians experience great persecution and hatred throughout the world (Matthew 24v9; Luke 21v12-16)
- Worship of the world dictator mandated by supreme religious leader (Revelation 13v8-15)
- Jewish nation finally accepts Jesus as Messiah (Zechariah 12v10-13; Luke 13v34-35; Romans 11v1-32).

Natural

- Decay and devastation of the earth due to people's disobedience to God (Isaiah 24v1-23; Micah 7v13; Romans 8v19-22)
- Much of the earth's rivers and seas poisoned - literally 'turned to blood' (Revelation 8v8-11, 16v3-4)
- Fearful, unnatural roaring and tossing of the sea (Luke 21v25)
- Extreme earthquakes, famines, plagues and huge hailstones (Matthew 24v7; Luke 21v10; Revelation 6v7-8, 6v12, 16v2, 16v18-21)
- 'Hail and fire', the sun scorching the earth and darkness (Revelation 8v7, 16v8-10)
- Signs in the sky - the sun darkened, the moon turned red, and stars 'fall from the sky' (Isaiah 13v9-13, 34v4; Joel 2v30-31, 3v14-15; Matthew 24v29; Luke 21v25; Revelation 6v8, 6v12-14, 8v12, 16v10).