

The End Times

Series: Prophecy

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Thus far we have looked at Prophecy in General, Messianic Prophecy, and Nationalistic Prophecy. Today we will look at End Time Prophecy. Often this is called “the last days” or those events leading up to the very end of the world and the return of Jesus. The fancy word is eschatology. It is clear that most Christians believe that Jesus is coming back. He said He would in John 14:2-3, “My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back** and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” The division in this subject comes with trying to determine the events surrounding Christ’s return. Traditionally there are three views that center in the interpretation of Rev.20 of the 1000 year reign of Christ. They are:

- Premillennialism: “That Christ will return and institute a kingdom of perfect peace and righteousness on earth that will last for one thousand years. After this reign of true peace, eternity begins.” (**The Last Days Handbook** by Robert Lightner, p.22)
- Amillennialism: “That when Christ returns, eternity begins with no prior thousand-year (millennial) reign of on earth.” (IBID) I would add that in this view the 1000 years is not literal, beginning when Jesus ascended back to heaven to be seated at the right hand of God and presently reigning through His church. (Acts 2:33-36)
- Postmillennialism: “That through the church’s influence the world will be Christianized before Christ returns. Immediately following His return, eternity begins.” (IBID)

Depending on which view you take, Scripture is interpreted to fit. Or to say it the other way, one’s interpretation of Scripture leads to one of these three views.

I have had to think carefully about what I could present on this subject in this short time frame. I have two goals:

- To consider the plain words of Jesus regarding His second coming to see what framework we should have on the interpretation of Scripture regarding that coming.
- To consider the plain view of the apostles in the first century regarding this second coming without trying to make their words fit some eschatological view.

Mark 13 (Another account of Matt.24): Destruction of Jerusalem or End of the World?

Mark.13:1-31, Destruction of Jerusalem BUT>>>>

See the Son of Man coming... Is this the second coming of Christ at the end of the world? Or is this some coming of Christ in judgment on Jerusalem. Compare

- 13:24-25, “But in those days, following that distress ‘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.’”
 - Isa.13:10 and 34:4, These are contained in prophecies against Babylon and other nations. This is apocalyptic language to describe a horrific national event, like the fall of a nation. This is not literal. It might be like us saying “my world came crashing down.”
 - The critical point of interpretation of prophecy is when to take it literally and when to interpret it figuratively.
- 13:26, “At that time (when the stones of the temple are thrown down) people will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.”
 - The idea of the coming of the Lord has many different meanings depending on the context. One meaning is coming in judgment.
 - Isaiah 26:21 For behold, **the Lord is about to come** out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover her slain.
 - Isa.64, Four times it mentions God coming or coming down for judgment. 64:1, “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down....” 64:2 “....come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause nations to quake before you.”
- 13:27, “And He will send His angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”
 - Could this not be the Great Commission (Matt.28:18-20) to make disciples of all nations?
 - The context forces the interpretation.
- 13:32-37, “But about that day or hour **no one knows**, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on your guard! Be alert! **You do not know** when the time will come. It is like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because **you do not know** when the owner of the house will come back-whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!”

Here is what we know thus far:

- 1) We must interpret prophecy in the most natural manner, understanding the more difficult parts in light of the clearer parts.
- 2) We can also find precedent for interpretation in other parts of the Bible where similar language is used.
- 3) When Jesus says “No one knows” then why do we look for specific ways to know?

The Apostles Make It Clear Christ Will Return (but don't tell us when)

1 Thess.4:13-5:11, 13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. 14 For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that **God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.** 15 According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left **until the coming of the Lord**, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 **For the Lord himself will come down from heaven**, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. **And so we will be with the Lord forever.** 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

1 Now, brothers and sisters, **about times and dates** we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come **like a thief** in the night. 3 While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them **suddenly**, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

2 Peter 3:10-13 10 **But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.** The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to **a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.**

In my opinion too much time has been spent trying to figure out exactly when Jesus is coming back and not enough time getting ready for His coming back. If we really believe that He could return at any moment how would we live differently?