

# The End

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[0:00] Where on earth is our world headed? That's a question which dominates the minds of many people today.

! From pandemics to wars, people worry about the future.! For those with no faith in God, there's not much we can say other than, you tell me.

I don't know. But for those with faith in God, we can say exactly where God wants it to go.

Exactly where God wants it to go. God is in control. The world is headed exactly in the direction He wants it to. God knows the future because He has already determined the future.

Listen carefully. For the Christian, the world is a safe place because it's in the hands of God. For the Christian, the world is in a safe place because it's in the hands of God.

[1:06] Now, that doesn't mean to say that the world will go on in the same way it always has. For example, the invention of the internet and the mobile phone means the world's a very different place for children today than it was when I was a child.

But God and His plans do not change. God will bring this world to an end at a time of His own wise, loving, and sovereign choice.

But what will that end be like? Throughout the Bible, there are many tantalizing hints to what that end shall be like. There are clear principles.

The Lord Jesus Christ shall return in glory and every human eye shall see Him. And when He comes, He shall come to judge the living and the dead. But other than that, there is considerable ambiguity.

If we needed to know, God would clearly have told us. The fact that it's clouded in mystery is a sign that we cannot and must not be definite. It's ambiguous because in the Bible, prophecies concerning the end of time are mixed with prophecies concerning judgments in time.

[2:19] Let me explain this. Imagine you're in the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range. You look up at a mountain. But because it's in the direct line of sight between you and Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the range, you aren't sure exactly what mountain you're looking at.

The peak of Mount Everest far away? Or a lower peak standing between you and that highest peak? When it comes to Luke chapter 22, verses 5 through 28, we're hearing Jesus in the style of an Old Testament prophet mixing a closer judgment, a judgment in time, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, with the ultimate far-off judgment, the second coming of Jesus to judge the living and the dead.

There are verses in this passage which seem to relate to what? And verses which seem to relate to the other. Christians in the evangelical and reformed tradition disagree about these things, and you can make up your own mind.

What I intend to do today is to comment on the principles of this passage without getting into the details of each individual verse and discussing with you the various merits of premillennialism, amillennialism, postmillennialism, or panmillennialism, whatever.

It's clear that in this passage, Jesus is speaking about what will happen in the days following his death and resurrection, days which in the New Testament are called the end times.

[4:00] So, we've been in the end times since Jesus rose from the dead. In these verses, Luke chapter 22, not to get lost in the wood for the trees, we want to highlight three things.

End time trouble, end time discipleship, and end time glory. End time trouble, discipleship, and glory. End time trouble, first of all.

Jesus said these words round about A.D. 28, 29. Forty years later, in A.D. 67, the Jews rebelled against Rome.

Rome replied by sending three legions to subdue the rebellion. In A.D. 70, after a long siege, they entered Jerusalem. They massacred the people.

They destroyed the temple, and they banned the Jews from returning to their homeland. Something which was only reversed in 1948 with the institution of the nation-state of Israel.

[5:20] Much of what Jesus says in this passage relates to the troubles accompanying the defeat of the Jews by the Roman army and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Jesus is seeing, with unerring spiritual perception, what will happen some 40 years in the future from when he first spoke these words. His comments on the future follow on from how the people of his day were admiring the decoration of the temple.

To which Jesus says, His listeners were shocked because, you know, as we know, there will always be an England.

There will always be a temple. So they asked him, Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign that they're about to take place? Remember, the immediate question Jesus is answering here concerns the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, not the final end-time judgment. To go back to the Himalayas, he's describing the lower peak closer to him than that of Mount Everest far away. And the overriding theme of this passage is trouble.

[6:42] The trouble will be a sign of the destruction of Jerusalem. But shall that trouble be a sign of the final judgment? Well, that's up for discussion. Unmistakably, though, here, Jesus is talking about events which immediately precede the destruction of the temple, of Jerusalem, rather, in A.D. 70.

So he talks of wars, rumors of Jewish rebellion, the march of the Roman legions as they make their way to Judea. We mustn't think that in days before Facebook and social media, people were ignorant of things going on in the world.

They spoke to each other. And although they didn't get moment-by-moment news feeds, they knew what was happening. Jesus speaks of signs happening in the sky. And we know from history that there were three comets, including Halley's Comet, which appeared in the nighttime sky in the 60s A.D.

But in traditional Old Testament prophetic style, Jesus includes the whole of creation in the context of God's judgment. Earthquakes, famines, pestilences, apocalyptic signs in the heavens. Hyperbole was a common tool of Old Testament prophets like Malachi, Isaiah, Jeremiah. And Jesus uses it here to great effects.

[8:06] The persecution of Christians also features highly in Jesus' predictions. In verses 20, following, Jesus focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem.

He talks of it being surrounded by enemies, a reference to the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman legions. Usually people from the countryside flee into the city for safety.

But in those days, Jesus urges them to do the opposite, to flee from the city into the countryside because the city of Jerusalem is the target of the Roman army. Jesus says, alas for women who are pregnant and who are nursing infants in those days.

What a terrible time for a Jewish woman to have a child when the Romans are planning the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus predicts a massacre.

They will fall by the edge of the sword and the Jewish people being enslaved. They will be led captive among all the nations. Since those days, let's be straight about this, there has never been a people as hated as the Jews.

[9:16] Anti-Semitism has reached ridiculous new heights in our own day. Although they have their own homeland, Jews are still scattered across the whole world and they're hated everywhere.

When they're murdered, people cheer and think they've done their God a favor. Little do their killers know the wrath which shall come upon them on the day of Christ.

The point is, the days immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem will be days of trouble unlike anything experienced by the Jews up to that point.

As they see the Roman legions approaching, they may ask the question, where is God in all of this? Jesus, preempting their question, gives His own answer. He views these times of end-time trouble in terms of fulfillment, fulfillment.

In verse 22, these are the days of vengeance to fulfill all that is written. Vengeance is a very harsh word here. Perhaps a better translation would be justice.

[10:24] Justice is being served upon Jerusalem for its unfaithfulness to God and for its crucifixion of Jesus. It was a justice long prophesied even by the Old Testament prophets.

The legions were not acting on their own initiative. The sovereign God was in ultimate charge. And in verse 24, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, fulfilled, here's a reference to how the gospel will go forth unto all the nations and only when those nations are believed will the favor of God return to the Jews once more.

But again, we see that God is in control of all of human history using the troubles of our world as the tools of His fulfillment of the wise purposes of His salvation.

Verses 25 through 28, they seem to relate not to the closer time of Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70 at the hands of the Romans, but the further end of time judgment when Christ returns in the glory of His Father.

In mystical fashion, Jesus once again talks of signs in the heavens, the distress of the nations because of natural disasters, the powers of the heavens being shaken. What this means, I don't know, I don't care to speculate.

[11:51] Many have done so over the years, they've all been wrong. But once again, we see the pattern of troubles preceding and accompanying divine justice, but we also see the pattern of God being in unshakable control of it all.

End time troubles. There's nothing new under the sun. The world has always been in turmoil, rather like a pregnant mother going into labor. Before, and as part of God's judgments, there will be tribulations and troubles, but for a pregnant mother, the beginning of labor is a sign that a child is soon to be born.

And we must look at it the same way. Despite all the pains, these troubles are a sign that the kingdom of God is near. For the person who's not a Christian, you're not a Christian today, and you're looking at the world as it is.

There is no ultimate answer to the question of where this world's headed, or where you can have any hope. But for us as Christians who have Jesus' assurance of God's sovereign purposes for our world, though we may be unsettled, we need not be terrified.

For the Christian, the world's in a safe place because it's in the hands of our loving Heavenly Father. end time trouble. Second, end time discipleship, end time discipleship.

[13:26] Of course, Jesus' primary concern here is for His disciples and followers. They'll grow through troubled times also. The end times will be just as painful for them as it is for everybody else. Again, we're somewhat struggling to distinguish what judgments Jesus is referring to in this passage.

It's a really tough passage. whether that's the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, where the church, the early church, came under severe pressure, or the ultimate judgment of Jesus' return.

However, when it comes to how we should live as Christian believers in the end times, remember the end times stretch from the resurrection of Jesus to the second coming of Jesus, broadly speaking, the same principles apply to both.

And there are four. The first is, stand against. Stand against. In verse 8, Jesus says, see that you are not led astray, for many will come in My name, saying, I am He, and the time is at hand.

Do not go after them. He's speaking here of Jewish leaders who are claiming to be the Messiah. Perhaps they are Jewish warriors, so frustrated with the Roman occupation, they claim to be the Messiah so they can raise rebellion.

[14:53] Or, as the church grows, prominent figures who, in the name of Christ, call upon Christians to fight. The early church should not be deceived.

There is only one Messiah, Messiah, and His name is Jesus of Nazareth. Throughout the centuries, many have risen to say, I am God's answer to this world's problems.

I am God's answer to this world's problems. Some have even risen in the church, and many have been deceived by them. Other cult leaders have confidently predicted the exact time of Christ's return, and gathered round them gullible, foolish people to wait expectantly.

Jesus says, do not be led astray. We must stand against anyone who claims either to be the Christ, to know the mind of Christ as regarding the timing of its return, or anyone who says, I am the answer to this world's problems.

Stand against. Second, stand for, stand for, the end time will herald days of intense persecution.

[16:09] Christians handed over to the authorities for judgment. Not only will the Christians in Judea have to deal with the Roman invasion, but they'll be treated by the Jews as traitors. If you read the book of Acts, this is exactly what happened in the years following the resurrection of Jesus.

Christians were targeted for special treatment We also know from historical records that until the year 312 AD when Constantine was converted, the Roman Empire persecuted Christians.

But Jesus says, this will be your opportunity to bear witness. This will be your opportunity to bear witness.

In front of courts and of judges, Christians will have a public opportunity to tell the story of Jesus and to proclaim the gospel. We think here of the Apostle Paul who on numerous occasions was dragged before judges, princes, and kings and given opportunity to share the gospel with powerful people.

This has been the pattern throughout the ages. Yes, even today. as Christians, we might be persecuted in our schools, in our workplaces, in our universities, perhaps even in our family settings.

[17:39] View these persecutions as opportunities to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus. third, stand against, stand for, stand firm, stand firm.

In verse 19, Jesus says, by your endurance you will gain your lives. Jesus calls on his people despite all the troubles they will face to persevere, keep going, endure to the very end.

you're going to be persecuted for your faith in Jesus. But rather than give up your faith you must stand firm. You're going to be exiled from your homes.

You're going to have to seek refuge in other countries. But you must persevere. We must never undervalue perseverance in the Christian life.

No matter what comes our way in the grace of Jesus we must keep going. We may be caught up in all the troubles of the end times.

[18:44] We may be put under pressure on account of our faith in Jesus Christ. We may be tempted to give it all up. But even if it means just clinging by our fingertips the true disciple of Christ must persevere.

She must stand firm even though on the inside she shakes like a leaf. I have the greatest respect not for famous Christian preachers who stand up at conferences but for the unknown Christian who is persevering in the faith although she's passing through unbelievably difficult circumstances.

Stand firm. Stand against stand for stand firm and lastly stand up stand up. We began our sermon by asking the question where on earth is this world headed?

For thousands of years when faced by trouble people have been asking the same question but in the light of what Jesus says in this passage about troubles being the precursor to his second coming we can look at things a different way.

Let's use an earlier illustration. Labor pains are signs that a child is to be born. Labor pains are not a reason to be terrified but that soon a baby will appear.

[20:10] In the same way the troubles of the end times are not a reason for terror but rather a reason to as Jesus says in verse 28 straighten up raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near.

When everyone else is calling for the hills to hide them the Christian's head looks upwards. She's waiting longingly to see her Savior and Lord.

She's been through so much she's suffered so greatly now it's time for all her hopes and dreams to be fulfilled. Redemption is near. Her Redeemer is coming.

So it's time for her to raise her head. The message is clear. Christian discipleships in the end times consists in being on our guard against false messiahs by devoting ourselves to Christ and his word. It consists in standing for Christ when challenged to give a reason for the Christian hope we have. It consists in keeping going no matter how difficult it gets. And it consists in being filled second coming.

[21:21] Stand against stand for stand firm stand up. End time discipleship. Well then third and very briefly end time glory.

End time glory. As with every other passage in the gospels world the world shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

The whole earth shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. After all the troubles after all the sufferings Christ shall come in supreme power and glory.

Every eye shall see him Christ in the cloud. Clouds are often associated in the Bible with the coming of God to earth. God spoke from a cloud on top of Mount Sinai.

A cloud enveloped! the Mount of transfiguration glory. Jesus shall appear in a cloud. The glory cloud of God.

[22:46] A supernatural cloud which shall appear in the heavens in full view of every human being on earth. But when as in every other appearance of a cloud God remains hidden in the cloud in the second coming of Jesus God shall reveal himself from the cloud in the glory of Christ.

And it shall be as we read with power and with great glory. Power and glory such as the world has never seen. The weight of Christ's appearance shall be such that human beings shall fall before him in fear and trembling.

Some will call upon the mountains to hide them from the wrath of the lamb. But for we Christians it's going to be a day like no other. A day of fulfillment.

A day of joy when all our dreams and ambitions and hopes are realized and far more beside. We can't even begin to imagine sheer glory involved.

Imagine the northern lights and the sky the glory of the colors flashing everywhere. All the aurora of the world put together in one infinitely glorious light shore and at the head of it all the Lord Jesus Christ.

[24:14] It will be quite literally breathtaking. But what shall make it so breathtaking is who it is who is appearing. It's Jesus Christ the Son of Man as He calls Himself.

Earlier in our studies in the Gospel of Luke some of you might remember this we established that when Jesus uses this title of Himself Son of Man He wants us to understand it in terms of His suffering on our behalf.

The word Son of Man means He suffered on our behalf. So the 19th century free church theologian George Smeaton wrote of the title Son of Man wherever the Son of Man is found in the Gospels it always alludes to vicarious punishment vicarious punishment.

In other words the Son of Man is another way of talking about Jesus as the Savior who suffered and died for us upon the cross.

Who then shall we see coming from the cloud with power and great glory? It shall be the Savior who suffered for us. It shall be the Jesus who was tortured and crucified to take away our sins and to give us eternal life.

[25:37] In the love and the wisdom of the triune God, the same Jesus who's making these prophecies in Luke 21 is the Jesus who's crucified in Luke chapter 23 and is raised in Luke chapter 24.

The Jesus we shall see in power and great glory on that final day is the Jesus who was crucified in weakness and deep humiliation for us so that we by faith in him can live in the hope of his glory. Ultimately where is our world headed? Ultimately it's headed here. This one place. The glorious return of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Is this an end to which you look forward with dread or with hope? If it is with dread then please listen carefully.

to meet that Christ on the last day you need to first put your faith and trust in the Christ of the cross. To receive him as Lord then means you must receive him as Lord now.

[27:00] If you do that now by silently praying for Jesus to be your Lord and Savior you can approach that glorious future with hope and with confidence knowing as we've said since the very beginning for the Christian the world is in a safe place because it's in the hands of God.  
Amen.