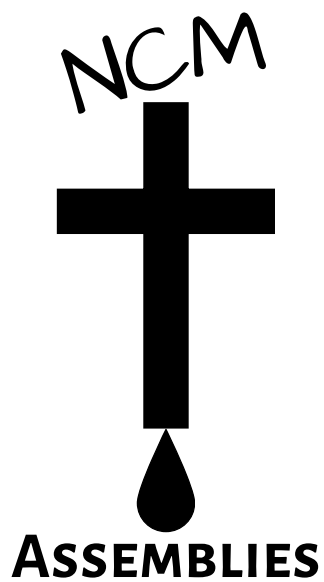


Are We Living in the Endtimes?



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The state of the world leaves little room for comfort to the millions of Christians living today. All around us we see misery in one form or another - between children starving to death in a world with ample food, and natural disasters increasing as our global climate changes. It can be no wonder that many Christians find themselves asking: *Is this it? Is this the end?*

The bible warns us that the world as we know it won't last forever. All of this misery, death, and sin will go away, replaced by an eternal Edenic paradise where God and men are in unity. But before we get there, we have to experience the end of this system. Everything we see around us - this very world! - will come to an end. These Endtimes are plagued by a tribulation so great that Jesus warned us it would be like none ever seen in the past, nor will we ever experience it again.

We see so many changes around us; some are good, and some are not. This rapid succession of change can undoubtedly bring us to wonder if we are living in the Endtimes today. Let's

examine bible prophecy to see what Yahweh warned us about the Last Days, and decipher if we are truly living in them now.

WHAT ARE THE “ENDTIMES”?

Contrary to popular belief, the “Endtimes” do not signify the end of everything. Instead, they represent a period of profound transformation on earth and in the heavens. The world, marred by sin and suffering, will be purified in a lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). Simultaneously, the heavens will undergo a cleansing by fire, expelling any rebellious spirits from God's presence (2 Peter 3:10). Once this purification is complete, a new heaven and a new earth will emerge, replacing the old (Revelation 21:1).

Given that both heaven and earth will continue after the Endtimes, why do we refer to this period as “the Endtimes”?

Even though both the heavens and the earth will exist after the Endtimes, there will be significant enough changes to each system as we know it to be called “new systems” (2

Corinthians 5:17). Profound changes we will see around us, to the point where we will not recognize the earth for what it was. Death and sin will be no more, there will be unity and peace among the people. This time, known as the eternal sabbath, will be a new era - one that lasts forever, filled with God's peace. In this way, we recognize that the Endtimes aren't the end of the world; but rather, the end of eras filled with suffering.

BIBLICAL ERAS - OUR PLACE IN THE TIMELINE

It's easy to say that the Endtimes result in the end of the biblical timeline. Yet the bible is an eternal document put forth by Yahweh God to record the history of truth. How can it come to an end? What is the bible timeline?

The bible flows smoothly across the ages, recording histories that have long since been lost to mankind. From creation to the gospels, the bible tells the story of God's relationship with man. Through the bible's many pages, we can watch how that relationship changed as mankind grew and expanded. We see examples of men harboring great resentment for God,

and the natural consequences that came with their rejection of Him. We also find the tales of those who trusted in Yahweh and leaned on His support in times of great trouble, reaping the benefits of their close friendship with our Creator.

These histories, whether good or bad, can be divided into seven 'eras' which summarily describe the state of man's relationship with God at that time. The seven biblical eras are:

1. The Creation
2. The Patriarchs
3. The Old Covenant
4. The Exile/The Minor Prophets
5. The Gospel
6. The Apostolic, and
7. The Final Sabbath

Each of the past eras took place over a finite amount of time, during which mankind's relationship with God evolved and changed. For instance, in the Creation Era, mankind had a deep, and personal relationship with Yahweh. They met with Him face-to-face, and learned

from Him the ways of the world. Yet that era would also contain distrust, deceit, and ultimately betrayal. Meanwhile, the Gospel Era shows how God strived to redeem mankind through the efforts of His son, Jesus the Christ. In that day, mankind struggled to form true worship of our Creator, instead relying on old and outdated customs that, in fact, perjured God's original intent behind the Law of Moses. Jesus spread the Gospel message; that mankind could not redeem itself and that the End will be coming soon. Not everyone listened to Jesus' words, but enough did that the assembly was able to be formed.

Since the Gospel Era was complete when Jesus ascended into Heaven to serve at Yahweh's right hand, and the Final Sabbath has yet to come about, we know we are situated in the Apostolic Era. What marks this era as unique from the others?

The Apostolic Era is the era in which the apostles - learned scholars who follow Jesus' teachings, take over the task of spreading the gospel message. The New Covenant, formed

when Jesus sacrificed himself for the sins of mankind, forges a strong and eternal relationship between man and God. An apostle is someone chosen by God to build upon the foundation of the assembly. Apostles are no mere ministers. They work to establish new congregations and distinguish doctrine from scripture. Men and women can not be appointed as apostle by other men; only God can choose an apostle.

Throughout all the biblical eras, men looked forward to the time of the Final Sabbath. In the Apostolic Era, we are granted the unique position of being able to look *back* onto history and learn from the many who came before us. We have the teachings from each era to guide us and sustain us on our spiritual journey. This is why Yahweh called the original apostles to write their teachings down for those who came after. Using these writings, God provided us with the Bible, so we can learn and prepare for what is to come.

The Apostolic Era is the final era before the Final Sabbath. That means that some of those

who live in this age *will* live to see the Endtimes.

“NO ONE KNOWS THAT DAY OR HOUR”

We know that the Endtimes will come at the end of this era, but we can't say more of a timeline than that they will come 'soon'. Why is that?

When asked directly when the Endtimes would come, Jesus told his disciples that no one knows. No prophet, no rabbi, no angel, not even Jesus knows (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32). Only Yahweh God knows when the End will come. Many ask, *why would Yahweh choose to keep such important information from us? Even from Jesus?*

Yahweh does not keep this secret lightly. He chooses to be discreet about the Endtimes for a reason. It is only by God's authority that the Endtimes come. If no one knows the day or the hour, no one can try to prematurely bring it about. Furthermore, because no one knows that time, there is no chance for deception on the part of Satan and the demons to claim that

they caused it to happen. It will come as a surprise to all, when we least expect it (Matthew 24:4). The bible describes it as a “thief in the night” and warns us all to “be on the watch” (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 3:3).

Though we do not know exactly when the End will come, Yahweh did not want His followers to be unprepared. For that reason, He gives us signs to look out for that will indicate to us that the End is shortly coming. Let’s look at those signs.

SIGNS OF THE END

The first sign Yahweh told us to look out for is a declaration of peace and security. (1 Thessalonians 5:3). This declaration will likely come from a unified world government association, but the bible does not state that directly. Instead it tells us that worldly government leaders will make this declaration. We are explicitly instructed not to believe in this false world peace, as the End will come directly afterwards.

Next we know that people will become terrible. They will lean heavily into sins, and commit harmful practices that destroy the earth and those living on it (2 Timothy 3:1-5). At that time, the love of money will be so strong that people will value wealth over lives. The love of God will have evaporated from the majority, and selfishness will abide. Already we see some of this is in the world, perpetuated by those who sneer God's Name. This attitude will increase as time goes on, and become unbearable in the Endtimes.

As humanity continues to grow in their selfish ways, a vast majority will deny the gospel teachings altogether (2 Peter 3:3-4). From those who claim to be godly, there will be a great departure from the teachings of scripture (1 Timothy 4:1). False prophets, some doubtless influenced by demons, will begin to try to sway any who stay on the truly righteous path (Matthew 24:24).

From the very beginning of the Apostolic Era, false teachings took root, many congregations preaching falsehoods popping up around the

assembly. Paul warned anyone seeking gospel truth to ascertain that what they are learning is, in fact, the truth. We can do this by praying sincerely to Yahweh God, studying the bible carefully, and allowing Yahweh's holy spirit to influence our hearts towards the righteous way.

Some of the signs Jesus told us to look out for included earthquakes, famines, pestilence, and war (Luke 21:11, Matthew 24:7). Together, these signs make up what we call the Great Tribulation. Jesus warned his disciples that the tribulation would be "greater than what has come before or will come again" (Matthew 24:21). During this period, immediately after the declaration of peace, true Messianic believers would experience persecution like none in the history of man.

Before any of this, however, there is one sign of the end that precludes even the declaration of peace and security. That is the global spread of the gospel message. Jesus made it clear that the gospel would be heard around the earth before the end would come. Christians today eagerly participate in this course, dedicated to

seeing Yahweh's will be done on the earth that He created. Already the bible has been translated into some 740 languages from around the world. The message is being shared in increasingly challenging places, like China, Russia, South America, and in places in Africa.

These signs point to the end being imminent...but not yet upon us. For instance, while some of these signs are already coming to pass - such as the attitude of the many turning cold and a mass turn away from true scripture, some other signs have yet to be witnessed. We have not had a declaration of peace, nor has true worship been directly outlawed worldwide. Yet the signs we are seeing tell us that the End draws ever near. How can Christians prepare for what is to come?

BE ON THE LOOKOUT

Yahweh gave us these signs to look out for so that we can prepare for what is to come. Jesus instructed his disciples to prepare themselves. Remember, the End is to come upon us like a thief in the night. Just as we can set up

measures to protect ourselves against burglars, we can likewise put up protective measures to ready ourselves for the Endtimes.

First thing we must do is adjust our attitude. Many today have grown up learning to live for the moment. We immerse ourselves in the present with no real thought to the past or the future. Christians, however, must bear in mind that our current system is both is unstable and temporary. We need to focus on God's plans, and make His way our own. By doing so, we can live for the time to come, and not the time that is.

There are simple actions that Christians can take to be ready when the time comes. By *practicing holiness*, or obeying the commands of Yahweh, we build reliance on our Creator. That way, when the time comes to follow orders that aren't immediately comforting or don't immediately make sense, we are have built a lasting trust in God that leads us to take that course without hesitation. Some of the prophecies given by Jesus indicate that Christians are to flee when the antichrist rises in

Jerusalem. This course will be on that undoubtedly brings hardship to those that keep it. Yet it is for our own safety that we take this action. Yahweh would not have ordered it otherwise.

Another thing Christians ought to do in this time before the End is to *stay vigilant* (1 Peter 5:1-5). We know what the signs are of the End, therefore we need to keep our eyes open to these signs. Wherever we see them, we need to keep mental note. By sticking together and attending regular meetings, we can *encourage one another* as these dark times grow ever closer (Hebrews 10:25). This helps strengthen our resolve, both as individuals and as an assembly.

One basic thing we can do to prepare for the End is to *have on hand a disaster kit*. A disaster kit holds essential supplies needed in case of a natural or manmade disaster. The Great Tribulation promises that there will be massive natural disasters. We can show Yahweh that we trust and believe in His son's words by having a kit on hand, so that when these disasters strike,

we are able to get through them.

While it is pointless to dwell upon exactly when the End will come, we can say with certainty that we are near to that time. Every day, we are closer than the last to the Endtimes. Until we reach that last day, Christians need to be aware of our place in the bible timeline, and take action now that will save us for when that time comes.

