

What Will Happen At The End?

Introduction. People often make predictions regarding the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. Harold Camping insisted that the end would come on May 21, 2011. When that day came and went without incident, the date was changed to October 21, 2011, which again came and went without incident. In 2012 we were been told that, according to the Mayan Calendar, the world was supposed to end on December 21. Of course, we know that these predictions have been proven false.

The end of the world fascinates many people. Unfortunately, few of these people turn to the Bible to learn about this event, and many of those who do turn to the Bible rely heavily on speculation and fascination rather than solid Bible interpretation. What does the Bible say concerning the end of the world? Can we know when this will take place, and what events will occur?

I. The Lord Will Return

- A. The second coming of Jesus will be one of the three significant world events, along with the crucifixion and resurrection, that the world will witness. The Lord's return will mark the end of this world and the beginning of eternity.
- B. Several facts about the Lord's return have been revealed:
 - 1. It will be a personal appearance (Acts 1:9-11).
 - 2. He will come in the clouds, the same manner in which He was taken up from the disciples on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-11; cp. Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26-27; Luke 21:27; Revelation 1:7).
 - 3. His return will be announced by "a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
 - 4. No one knows when the Lord will return. Not even the Lord knew when He would return (Matthew 24:36). The time of the Lord's return is like a thief in the night (Matthew 24:43-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2; 2 Peter 3:10).
- C. All of this tells us that the Lord's return will not be in secret, as is claimed by Jehovah's Witnesses and Premillennialists. Neither is it predictable, as claimed by various cults and TV evangelists. We cannot know when the Lord's return will happen, but all of us will know when it does happen.

II. The Dead Will Be Raised

- A. When we die on the earth, our spirits enter the Hadean realm until the final judgment (Revelation 20:13). Jesus gave us a glimpse of what happens after death in Luke 16:19-31.
 - 1. This realm includes two compartments. The first is "Paradise" or "Abraham's bosom" (v. 22; cp. Luke 23:43). This is where Lazarus was comforted.
 - 2. The second compartment is "torments" (v. 23). This is where the rich man suffered in "anguish" (v. 24). This is referred to as "Hell" in Luke 16 and in 2 Peter 2:4 ("Tartarus"), but is actually the Hadean realm.
 - 3. After death, human spirits go to either the torment side or the Paradise side, depending on how they conducted themselves in their fleshly bodies.
- B. When the Lord returns "the dead in Christ will rise" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Our resurrected bodies will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual, and unlike

our natural, earthly, physical bodies (1 Corinthians 15:35-49). Any further description of what we will be like after the resurrection is unknown (1 John 3:2).

- C. Premillennialism teaches that there are at least three separate resurrections, but the Bible plainly says there will be one universal resurrection of all mankind. Jesus said there would be one hour in which all who are in the graves, both good and evil, would come forth (John 5:28-29). Paul said that there will be “a” (singular) resurrection of the dead in Acts 24:15.

III. Those Who Are Living Will Be Changed

- A. Flesh and blood (physical bodies) cannot inherit or enter into a purely spiritual existence, so those who are alive at that time will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).
- B. The bodies of those who are still alive will have to be changed into incorruptible, immortal, spiritual bodies. This change will instantaneously take place after the Lord has appeared and the dead have been raised.

IV. Those Who Are Alive Are Caught Up To Meet The Lord In The Air

- A. After our bodies have been prepared for eternity, we will be taken off the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:17).
- B. When the Lord returns, we will meet Him in the air. He will not come to meet us on the earth. The Bible never says Jesus will come to earth again.

V. The Earth Will Be Destroyed

- A. Peter teaches the certainty of the world’s destruction (2 Peter 3:10-12). It will mark the end of God’s forbearance, and it will begin with a loud noise made by something passing swiftly through the air.
- B. The heavens will pass away with fire, the elements which make up this physical universe will melt away, and the earth and all that it contains will be burned up. This fire will not be for purging or cleansing — it will be for destruction.
- C. Verse 11 sharpens our focus regarding the importance of studying this subject. Knowing about the end is more than an academic exercise; it is absolutely crucial for us to

VI. Judgment

- A. After the earth is destroyed, all of mankind will be brought before Christ for judgment by what He said on earth (John 12:48; Acts 17:31). Judgment will be personal and on an individual basis (Romans 14:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:10). We will be judged according to our own works (Revelation 20:11-15).
- B. The purpose of judgment day will not be to make a decision about our fate. That decision is made by our response to the gospel while we live on the earth (John 3:17-21). Judgment day will not be our day in court, a time when we can plead our case or beg for mercy. It will be a day of sentencing and separation.

VII. Eternity

- A. The results of judgment will be the beginning of eternity for mankind (Matthew 25:31-32, 46).

- B. Those who are saved will enter into Heaven with Christ to be delivered to the Father (Matthew 10:32; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1-5). Those who are lost in their sins will depart from Christ and be cast into Hell with the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

Conclusion. There are many details of the Lord's return which remain shrouded from our understanding (Deuteronomy 29:29). However, what we need to know has been revealed so we can have comfort and prepare for that great day.

We do not know when the Lord will come and bring an end to the world. There are no signs that can alert us to its approach. Since we do not know when the Lord will return, He encouraged us to watch and be ready (Matthew 24:42-44; 25:1-13). Are you ready for the Lord's return?