

## Is The End Near?

By Stephen Hicks

As we watch the world spin farther and farther into darkness it is hard not to think that the end must be very near. In fact, many get their hopes up only to become discouraged when it doesn't happen.

Many false prophets and ministers of different church organizations continue to try to predict the time that Jesus will appear. When He doesn't show up according to their prediction, then they must act quickly to explain why, and then will immediately set another date for His return.

The disciples wanted to know, and Jesus said that it was not for anyone to know the time of His return. Acts 1:6-7 *"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."*

He also made it clear that He didn't even know what time He would return. Mark 13:32-33 *"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."*

Why would God keep this a secret from us? My own thought on this is that if we knew the exact day of His return, how many people would choose to continue doing their own thing up until a short time before He comes back and then repent? Knowing the thoughts of man, God would have many reasons not to say.

Many leaders seem to believe that they will be seen as someone special if they can pick the exact time and day of His return.

Even sadder are all those people that listen to these false predictions instead of believing what Jesus said in the verses we just read. It is not for us to know the exact date and time.

In the 70's, the Church of God predicted Jesus' return, and many brethren blindly followed their direction. Because they followed man instead of God, it cost them their savings, property, and other assets. When the date passed with no return many became bitter at the leaders for lying to them. Yes, the leaders were wrong, but so were those that listened and followed.

What did Jesus say in Matthew 15:14 *"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."*

Isn't it enough of a challenge for us to learn to walk as Jesus walked? This is where I time should be spent, learning more about Him and what God desires of us. We have been given a commission to spread the gospel and to watch for the signs of His coming.

Mark 13:34-37 *"For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."*

The signs and warnings are all throughout the bible, but we must take the time to study them before we can begin to understand what to watch for. Let's look at what Jesus said in Matthew 24:1-24 *"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*

These first two verses are a prophecy about the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. The next verses are about future events that are happening and will happen in our time.

*Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? They were asking, "What should we look for?"*

*4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.*

*5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

There will be many deceivers from inside and outside God's church.

*6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.* There have been wars and rumors of wars for many years, but they will continue to increase as time goes on.

*7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.* We are now seeing the threat of nations rising against other nations, and we are seeing famines, pestilence, earthquakes, volcanoes, and disasters like have never been seen. As the next verse says, it is only the beginning.

*8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

*9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.* As the world drifts farther away from God, God's people will be hated by many. Families will betray one another and hatred will grow.

*10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.*

*11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.* As people continue walking contrary to God many more will be led astray by false prophets.

*12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.* Many, even church brethren, will lose hope because of the rise of evil. Hold fast to your hope and faith in the Lord.

*13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* We must endure all hardships, running the race and fighting the good fight to the end of our life or the return of the Lord.

*14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.* The truth of God will be preached to the whole world before Jesus returns. This includes the witness of the two witnesses and the other saints of God during the last 3 ½ years of the great tribulation.

*15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)* This is a very important sign that we are told to watch for. Let's look at Daniel's prophecy. Daniel 12:11 *"And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."*

The daily sacrifice of the Jews will be stopped halfway through the seven years of tribulation, and the beast and false prophet will set up a speaking image of the beast that will order all of God's people to be killed.

Matthew 24:16 *Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:*

*17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:*

*18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.*

*19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!*

*20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:* The armies of the beast power will surround all of Judea and they will take Jerusalem by force and cause destruction around the world during that time.

*21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* This will be a time of death and destruction like nothing anyone has ever seen. It will be so bad that if God does not intervene, there would be no one left alive.

22 *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

23 *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.*

24 *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”*

We need to stay focused and watch for the signs of His coming. We are not to follow after those who are predicting dates for Jesus’ return. As patience wears thin, people will begin to look for hope wherever they can find it. Some things will seem right, but will only lead to them falling in a ditch.

2 Peter 3:1-4 *“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”*

God will carry out His will no matter what you or I think about the way things should happen. It is a time of patience and trust in the Lord for us.

2 Peter 3:8-14 *“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”*

The Lord will appear during a time of great darkness, and He will send His angels to gather His elect, both dead and alive. This will happen at the end of the Great Tribulation period. Right now, our focus needs to be on serving and obeying God and preparing ourselves for the day of His appearance. Stay in the Word of God and you won’t be deceived by false prophets or false predictions. END