

GOD'S WORD

THE END TIMES

Ian Mann

All orthodox Christians agree that Jesus will return in the end times. What does the Bible tell us about this and what does it mean to us as Christians today?

1. There will be a sudden, personal, visible return of Christ

You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected. (Matthew 24:44, NLT)

When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. (John 14:3, NLT)

"Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!" (Acts 1:11, NLT)

For believers this is a good thing, we should long for Christ's return.

He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:20, NLT)

And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. (Titus 2:12-13, NLT)

2. When will Christ return?

We do not know exactly when Christ will return.

"So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return. (Matthew 25:13, NLT)

"However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. And since you don't know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert! (Mark 13:32-33, NLT)

Scripture that supports a sudden unexpected return.

"So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming. Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected. (Matthew 24:42-44, NLT)

For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. (1 Thes. 5:2, NLT)

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (Hebrews 10:25, NLT)

3. There are signs that precede Christ's return

Preaching of the Gospel to all nations:

For the Good News must first be preached to all nations. (Mark 13:10, NLT)

The Great Tribulation:

And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in many parts of the world, as well as famines. But this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come. (Mark 13:7-8, NLT)

For there will be greater anguish in those days than at any time since God created the world. And it will never be so great again. In fact, unless the Lord shortens that time of calamity, not a single person will survive. But for the sake of his chosen ones he has shortened those days. (Mark 13:19-20, NLT)

False prophets working signs and wonders:

For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones. (Mark 13:22, NLT)

Signs in the heavens:

At that time, after the anguish of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. (Mark 13:24-25, NLT)

The coming of the man of sin and rebellion:

Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come. (1 John 2:18, NLT)

The salvation of Israel:

And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say, "The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness. (Romans 11:26, NLT)

How imminent is the return of Christ? Remember that God has a different perspective on time than we do.

But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. (2 Peter 3:8-9, NLT)

The prophets were not so interested in chronology, the future was always viewed as imminent, and instead they encouraged every generation to live in expectancy of the end. It should encourage us to:

- Build our faith
- Strengthen our purpose
- Give us a sense of urgency
- Heighten our level of expectation

Apart from the heavenly signs it is possible, but unlikely, that all of the other signs have been fulfilled. Whenever the world goes through a crisis our perspective on the return of Christ becomes more apparent. Perhaps it is better to say that we do not know with certainty if all of the events have occurred, but we should have an expectation of His return.

4. End Times: The Millennium—three views

Then I saw thrones, and the people sitting on them had been given the authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for proclaiming the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They all came to life again, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4, NLT)

Premillennial: The Church Age will be followed by the Second Coming of Christ, the 1st resurrection and 1st judgement. There will then be a Sabbath Age of approximately 1,000 years when the saints are ruling with Christ. The millennium will be followed by the 2nd resurrection, the 2nd judgement and the new heavens and the new earth.

Amillennial: The Church age will be followed by the second coming of Christ, the resurrection, the final judgement, and the new heavens and the new earth.

Post-millennial: The Church age will be culminated by a long Kingdom Age during the church will be triumphant on the earth. This will be concluded by the second coming of Christ, the resurrection, the final judgement and the new heavens and the new earth.

MILLENNIAL OPTIONS			
Premillennial	Church Age	Millennium	New Heavens & New Earth
Amillennial	Church Age		New Heavens & New Earth
Postmillennial	Church Age	Kingdom Age	New Heavens & New Earth

5. End Times: There will be two resurrections

I have the same hope in God that these men have, that he will raise both the righteous and the unrighteous. (Acts 24:15, NLT)

6. End Times: There will be a final judgement

Takes place after the millennium (Revelation 20:1-6)

Jesus Christ is the Judge

I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom. (2 Timothy 4:1, NLT)

Both unbelievers and believers will be judged

I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God’s throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. (Revelation 20:12, NLT)

So why do you condemn another believer? Why do you look down on another believer? Remember, we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will declare allegiance to God.’ Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God. Both unbelievers and believers will be rewarded. (Romans 14:10-12, NLT)

For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. (2 Corinthians 5:10, NLT)

God’s judgement is just

After this, I heard what sounded like a vast crowd in heaven shouting, “Praise the Lord! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. His judgments are true and just. (Revelation 19:1-2, NLT)

Hell

"Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked" - Grudem

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better to enter eternal life with only one hand than to go into the unquenchable fires of hell with two hands. (Mark 9:43, NLT)

Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Matthew 25:30 (NLT)

"Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. (Matthew 25:41, NLT)

Note: A good book to read is *Erasing Hell* by Francis Chan and Preston Sprinkle.

- Final Judgement
- Brings final justice
- Means we can freely forgive others
- Motivates us to righteous living
- Motivates us for evangelism

7. There will be a new Heaven and Earth

"Heaven is the place where God most fully makes known His presence to bless" – Grudem

This is what the Lord says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. (Isaiah 66:1, NLT)

"Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. (Isaiah 65:17, NLT)

But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. (2 Peter 3:10 NLT)

We will get a resurrection body.

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die... (1 Corinthians 15:51-54, NLT)

This brings motivation for storing up heavenly treasures, that is to have an eternal perspective.

It is easy to speculate about the return of Jesus, particularly as we go through difficult times. Instead of being dismayed or losing heart. We should remember the words of Jesus.

So when all these things begin to happen, stand and look up, for your salvation is near!" (Luke 21:28, NLT)