

Why Study the Bible?

LESSON 1

What Is the "End of the World"?

1. Was Jesus ever questioned about the "end of the world" and the sign that would point to His return? Matthew 24:1-3.

COMMENT: The New Testament, as originally inspired by God, was written in the Greek language. The Greek word translated "world" here in Matthew is *aion*, meaning "age," not the physical planet on which we live. And so the Revised Standard Version translates the King James expression "end of the world" as "the close of the age."

Jesus, then, was questioned about the end of an "age" in man's history, rather than the total destruction of the terrestrial globe we call earth.

2. How long does the Bible tell us the earth will continue to exist? Ecclesiastes 1:4.

A Time of Great Trouble

Jesus proceeded to answer the second part of the disciples' question by giving them an outline of events to take place prior to His return to earth.

We pick up the account in Matthew 24:21.

1. Did Jesus prophesy that a time of great trouble would occur on the earth just before His return? Matt. 24:21.

2. What did Jesus declare would happen if these days of tribulation were allowed to continue? Matt. 24:22.

COMMENT: The Moffatt translation renders this verse clearer as "not a soul would be saved alive." This verse, then, is not referring to spiritual salvation at all, but to being saved from physical destruction—from premature death!

3. Did Jesus prophesy that only the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be threatened by total destruction? Or did He plainly say that no one would be safe from the threat of annihilation? Same verse.

COMMENT: The Revised Standard Version says "no human being would be saved... ."

4. Who will intervene in world affairs to cut short this time of trouble, and thus prevent the annihilation of all humanity? Mark 13:20.

COMMENT. These verses mean that just as originally planned, Jesus Christ will intervene at the very moment humanity would otherwise destroy itself. By His direct intervention, He Will CUT SHORT the days of man's rule over man, which would otherwise lead to the destruction of all human life on earth!

No Time Like It!

1. Has there ever been a time of trouble such as will occur just before Christ's return? Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19.

2. Were any of the Old Testament prophets inspired to foresee this same time of worldwide peril? Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1.

COMMENT. Since each of the preceding three prophecies reveal that the future period of crisis will have no equal, they only be referring to one great climactic period of worldwide trouble!

3. How did the prophet Joel symbolically describe the horrible events to take place at the close of this age? Joel 2:1-5.

COMMENT: Joel's God-inspired prophecy pictures the very same time of trouble prophesied by Christ, Jeremiah, and Daniel. This prophecy refers to events soon to occur at the close of this age, for only in this age of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons has such widespread destruction been possible!

4. Could the symbols seen by the prophet John indicate the use of modern weaponry? Revelation 9:2-10, 16.19.

COMMENT: John described what he saw in a vision of end-time events God had miraculously revealed to him. It was a mysterious, frightening spectacle. The creatures he saw were obviously symbolic of weapons God knew man would be capable of inventing in the end time.

5. Let us momentarily consider a time, over 4300 years ago, When God intervened in human affairs to postpone what we see threatening the world today. Did human beings speak one language? Genesis 11:1. What did they decide to do? Verse 4. Was this for the purpose of keeping themselves united? Same verse. What did God do to frustrate their plans'? Verses 5, 7-9. Why? Verse 6.

COMMENT: Verse 6 clearly indicates that God confused the language and scattered the people at Babel in order to restrain the misguided inventive genius of man! When human beings come to freely speak one another's languages, and share scientific and technological knowledge as they are doing today, then virtually anything man's mind can conceive of would be possible for him to achieve—even to exploring outer space and inventing weapons capable of destroying all life. By confusing the language and scattering the people at Babel, God PREVENTED man from accomplishing long ago what he has done today. It was not yet within God's plan to allow man to advance that far that soon!

Could anything be clearer? Can you see that we are living in the time Jesus spoke of in Matthew time when men would have at their disposal the power to erase all life from this earth!

The Cause of War

God promises He Will intervene in World affairs to prevent the annihilation of humanity, and to bring us world peace. And in order to ensure continued peace, He will also prevent future wars by changing that which causes war. Let's understand.

1. Does the Bible clearly show that war is a result of acting according to the inordinate lusts within man? James 4:1-2.

COMMENT. Unrestrained "human nature," with its pride, vanity, jealousy, lust and greed is plainly the CAUSE of war!

2. Does knowledge tend to increase pride? 1 Corinthians 8:1. Since We live in an age of mushrooming scientific knowledge which makes it possible for a few men to possess tremendous power, will the inordinate lusts of men "in the last days" cause them to become better and better, or worse and worse? II Timothy 3:1-4, 13.

3. What is the end result of decisions and actions that seem right to great leaders and people in general? Proverbs 14:12.

COMMENT: This principle is so important that God inspired its repetition in Proverbs 16:25.

4. What deceives man into believing that actions which end in death will bring peace? Jer. 17:9. (Remember that in Scripture the heart is often spoken of proverbially as the center or seat of human thoughts and emotions.) Then can rulers be deceived by their own lusts into believing that their evil deeds are right and good for the world? Same verse.

COMMENT: The governments of this world promise peace. But. men have only brought us more wars and have now led humanity to the brink of annihilation!

5. Do rulers even know the way to peace? Romans 3:17. What did God inspire Isaiah to write concerning man's real understanding of the way of peace? Isaiah 59:8.

6. What, will happen to human plans for "peace"? Isa 33:7-8. When ambassador of peace weep bitterly—when the land is laid waste—will God then intervene? Verse 10.

COMMENT: Throughout the Bible, war is pictured as the result of lust or covetousness. Lust is a basic characteristic of human nature. But can the heads of government of this world CHANGE human nature? Of course not! Nearly 6,000 years of human history have proved that man, left to himself, is totally incapable of effecting this change.

Throughout history, negotiations for peace have always been accompanied and supported by the most vigorous preparations war! The story is no different today.

Can any human government, therefore, permanently stop war? Obviously not. When you look at it that way, the answer becomes clear: Only GOD can permanently stop all war, because only God has the power to CHANGE human nature!

But exactly how will God create and maintain world peace once Jesus Christ returns? The only real and lasting solution to the problems of world peace has already been planned long ago. And the entire plan is revealed in your Bible.

1. Does God intervene in world affairs without first revealing it to His prophets? Amos 3:7.

2. Thousands of years ago, did God reveal to His prophet Isaiah a time when He would establish His government here on earth? Isa. 2:1-3. Is it to be a literal world-ruling kingdom? Dan. 2:44; Psalm 67:4.

3. Will there be warfare then as there is now among nations? Isa. 2:4. Will people be taught the way to peace and productivity? Same verse.

COMMENT: The very One who created man is coming to establish the Government of God on earth. and to teach man the way to peace—to guide his inventive genius entirely into peaceful channels.

4. Did Micah also foretell the establishment of Kingdom on earth? Micah 4:1-4.

COMMENT: An all-powerful, World-ruling government is indeed coming Will solve all global problems fairly and righteously for all peoples—a government ruled not by carnal men, but by the living, all—powerful Creator of the universe.

5. Notice who Isaiah prophesied would rule over the earth. Isa. 11:1-4. Is David the "stem," or son, of Jesse? Acts 13:22. Then is the "rod" or shoot plainly Jesus Christ? Verse 23. Is the "branch" growing out of Jesse's roots also referring to Christ? Jer. 23:5-6.

COMMENT. The prophecy in Isaiah 11 predicted, centuries in advance, that Jesus Christ would one day rule the earth.

6. Before Jesus born as a human being, did an angel tell Mary, His mother. that His destiny was to take over an actual throne and rule on this earth? Luke 1:32-33.

7. Was Daniel inspired to foresee the time when the saints — spirit-born Christians— will be given rulership over the earth with Christ? Dan. 7:18, 21-22, 27.

What Is the True "Gospel"?

1. Was Jesus sent to this earth nearly years ago to proclaim the words of the Father? John 12:49; 14:24. What message was included? Mark 1:14; Matt. 9:35. Did Jesus say one must believe that "gospel"? Mark 1:15: 16:15-16.

COMMENT. The word "gospel" means good news, or glad tidings. Jesus went about preaching the good news of the coming Kingdom of God! The gospel of Jesus Christ is simply the very same gospel preached. Jesus' gospel is not primarily a message about Himself personally, or about "receiving Jesus." It is not primarily a message about the events in His life and of His becoming the Savior of the world—although it most certainly does include all that.

The message Jesus preached is the good news that God will restore peace on earth by establishing His divine Kingdom over all nations. Christ, through the power of God, will at His second coming seize control of all human governments and rule by God's law. Jesus' gospel

includes how we may receive the gift of eternal life and become a part of that eternal, ruling Kingdom!

2. Did Jesus send forth His apostles and true ministers to preach that some gospel (including all His teachings) to the world'? Luke 9:1-2; Matt. 28:19-20. Was His gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to be preached in all the world just before the "end" and His second coming? Matt. 21:14; Mark 13:10.

3. What gospel did Philip preach? Acts 8:12. And Paul? Acts 19:8; 14:22. Did he preach the same gospel among the Gentiles at Ephesus? Acts 20:25. What gospel did he preach to both Jews and Gentiles at Rome? Acts 28:23, 28-31.

4. Did some false ministers in Paul's day try to pervert the gospel of Christ? Galatians 1:6-7. What condemnation does he pronounce on any who would try to preach any other "gospel?" Verse 8. Was it really a double curse? Verse 9.

COMMENT: Your Bible shows there is only ONE TRUE GOSPEL! We hear many "gospels" about Christ today, but how many do you hear preaching the "gospel Of Christ" - the gospel He preached—the "gospel of the Kingdom of God"?

God's 7000-year Plan

God has get aside a period 7,000 years to fulfill His plan for mankind. And God's little-understood plan for man began nearly 6,000 years ago. The pattern for this plan is given in the first two chapters of Genesis. It is the week of seven days.

1. Is a thousand years as a "day" to God, and vice versa? II Peter 3:8.

2. In Hebrews 4:4, 11, the seventh day of the week is pictured as a type of the peaceful "rest" on earth which will follow Christ's return. Is the time of Christ's rule over the earth, which will follow this present age of human misrule and senseless warfare, specifically called a thousand years? Rev. 20:4.

COMMENT: Since the last "day" of God's plan is 1,000 years, then it logically follows that the preceding six "days" would amount to 6,000 years—a total of 7000 years.

3. When the disciples asked Jesus if He would restore the Government of God in their day, what was His reply? Acts 1:6-7.

COMMENT: The apostles did not fully understand the general time frame of God's plan while Christ was yet with them, and for many years thereafter. At first, they thought the rule of God would be established in their day. But before they died, they understood Christ would return at a much later date. Peter said: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (of coming again) but is long-suffering..." (2 Peter 3:9). God is patient. He has refrained from intervening in world affairs for nearly 6,000 years. Why?

Because God has allotted mankind 6,000 years in which to learn that the ways of man bring nothing but SUFFERING and DEATH! Many Bibles contain tentative chronological dates showing that Adam may have been created in the year 4004 B.C. And nearly another 2,000 years have elapsed since Christ's birth—totaling just about 6000years of human civilization to date.

How awe-inspiring and significant that in OUR PRESENT AGE—in the very time that the world is threatened with the extinction of all life—6000 years have almost elapsed. How exciting that Jesus Himself said that when we would see all the events He foretold taking place, He would come again—this time to rescue humanity from annihilation, to set up the Kingdom of God, and to bring us lasting peace!

You have seen in your Bible a brief summation—a "thumbnail sketch"—of God's solution to this world's problems. You have begun to understand the urgent necessity for Christ's promised return.

In Lesson 2, you will learn more about Jesus Christ's spectacular intervention in world affairs as revealed in the amazing, detailed prophecies of your Bible.