

Are These the End Times?

In Luke 21:7, Jesus says, *“Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.”*

With everything happening in the world, it is not difficult to imagine that He might be describing the time we are living in right now. However, all of the things we see happening do not necessarily mean that is true. Other generations have also believed their time was the time when Christ would return, so we cannot know for sure. Jesus addresses this in Mark 13:32-37:

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!”

What Jesus is saying is that we cannot know when He will return, but it could happen at any time, and we must be prepared. Prepared for what? When Christ returns, all Christians will “raptured” into heaven before the tribulation begins. Anyone who is not a Christian will be “left behind,” which is the basis of the Left Behind book series.

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After

that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

Therefore, the next logical question is, “What is a Christian?” since the answer determines whether a person will go to heaven or be left behind to endure the suffering of the tribulation. Even if the rapture does not occur during our lifetime, this is important, because anyone who dies without being a Christian will not go to heaven, and there is only one other place to go—hell.

Before I continue, I want to mention that I believe that this does not apply to babies or anyone incapable of understanding and accepting what I am going to explain next. I believe that God does not hold people accountable who cannot possibly respond to His offer of salvation, and that He accepts them into heaven unconditionally. The rest of us, however, are responsible for what we do with God’s offer. What follows is something I wrote a while back to explain what it means to be a Christian. It is rather lengthy, but I believe it is important to explain what the Bible says and what it means. The most important decision a person can make in their entire life is whether to put his or her faith in God.

Man is Separated from God

When Adam and Eve sinned, they ruined it for all of us. From that point on, we were separated from God by sin. Not just Adam and Eve’s sin, but our sins as well. Although you may believe that you are a good person, the bible says differently:

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) “All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:12)

The Bible is clear that we are not “good” on our own merit. We cannot earn God’s forgiveness:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The only way by which we can be saved is through faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot earn God’s forgiveness through works (things we do). Our attempts to reach God through works all fall short. Even if it were possible to be good enough, how would you know? What would be good enough? It is easy to say a mass murderer is bad and Mother Teresa was good, but most of us fall somewhere in the middle. Do you see that there would be no way to know if we are “good” enough? The Bible says we can know with certainty if we are going to heaven or not:

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)

We do not have to wonder if we will go to heaven when we die. We can know for sure. How? Please read on.

Jesus Died for Our Sins

The only way for us to be reconciled to God is through His son. Jesus died on the cross so that we could be reconciled to God. Jesus is the bridge:

“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8)

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:17)

Not only did Christ die for us, but also we see that He did this while we were still sinners. He did not wait for us to “clean up our act,” or “get our life straightened out.” He made the first move. It is up to us to take the next step, which is accepting this gift through faith in Jesus Christ.

You Must “Cross Over” the Bridge

Jesus said: *“I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* (John 14:6)

We “cross over” by putting our faith in Jesus, and in what He did on the cross for us.

“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:13) *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”.* (1 John 1:9)

Nothing we do will earn our way in to heaven. Not going to church. Not giving money to the church, or to charity. Not doing good deeds. Not being confirmed or going through catechism classes. Not even being baptized. Christians may do all of these things, but they do not MAKE someone a Christian. The ONLY thing that matters is whether you have put your faith in Jesus Christ. It is not enough just to know this; we have to act on it, by admitting that we have rebelled, and that we want His forgiveness and leadership. How do we do that? Read on.

Accept God’s Gift

If you have never accepted God’s gift of forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ, there is never a better time than right now. Maybe you have never done this, or you are not sure if you have. You can pray this prayer, or something like it:

“Dear God, I know I am a sinner. Please forgive me. Thank you for your Son Jesus Christ and His death on the cross for my sins. I believe that you raised Him from the dead. I accept Jesus, right now, as my personal Lord and Savior. Please help

me to begin to live my life in the way you want me to from this day forward. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen."

Perhaps you prayed something like this a long time ago, but you have fallen away from God. If you would like to recommit yourself to Him, pray this prayer:

"Dear God, please forgive me for not living my life the way you want me to. I recommit myself to you right now, and I ask you to help me start living my life for you from this day forward. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen."

All scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV) except as noted.

For the original article, visit .