

5 Ways You Can Prepare for the End Times

When I was growing up, I had a friend down the street whose mother loved puzzles. Really big, complicated puzzles with very small pieces. Watching the process, I learned that a puzzle master must consult the picture on the top of the box as the template for the final product.

The same is true of the end-time prophetic puzzle. The end-time picture set forth in Scripture is the picture on top of the box. When all the pieces are finally in place, that's what it will look like. As we look at our world today, events are beginning to closely match the picture on the puzzle box. All the puzzle pieces aren't in place, but the corners and edges have taken form. The framework is set. The center of the puzzle is ready to be filled in.

Israel is back in her ancient homeland after almost 2,000 years of dispersion. Russia is rising. Iran is increasing. Russia and Iran are allied for the first time in history. Turkey is turning to Russia and Iran. Russia and Iran are positioned in Syria on Israel's northern doorstep. Anti-Semitism is surging. The Middle East, the biblical staging ground for the end times, is the focus of the world's attention.

This raises a critical question: How should we live in light of what's unfolding in our world? In light of what lies ahead? What should we do?

Though there are many practical implications of knowing what's coming, let me suggest five simple, practical points of application for you to make part of your thinking and living that will make a difference in your life today.

- 1. Recognize the Bible is true.** We can rest assured that

the biblical predictions that are still unfulfilled will come to pass. We can also rest assured that what the Bible tells us about God, Jesus, salvation, sin and our own lives is trustworthy and reliable.

So, recognize the Bible is true and to read it regularly. Soak in its truth and apply its instruction to your daily life. It will transform you.

2. **Realize your need for Jesus.** The Bible not only accurately predicts the future, but it also accurately portrays the human condition apart from God. The inspired, inerrant Word of God truthfully, transparently diagnoses the condition of every person. It tells that we have all sinned and are falling short of God's righteous standard (Rom. 3:23).

You and I can't get rid of one of our sins on our own, let alone the thousands of transgressions that pile up throughout our lives. The Bible is clear that our sins can only be washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ, that is, His death for us. His death in our place.

Jesus is the only Mediator, the only go-between who can bridge the chasm between a holy God and sinful people. He is your only hope for heaven. No one will be in heaven without personally trusting in Him for salvation.

If you've never received Jesus as your Savior from sin, that's the first thing you need to do before you do anything else. He is life. He is truth. He is the way to God.

3. **Remember God is in control.** More and more today, our world seems out of control. We live in a world of cascading crises. Violence is mushrooming. Volcanoes are spewing ash all over the planet. Natural disasters are becoming more commonplace and destructive. The earth itself is groaning. Seemingly unsolvable problems plague our nation and global community.

Our world today is experiencing some major instability. The same can be true in our personal lives. We often find ourselves flying into turbulence. Sometimes the engines stall. Things might be so bad we find ourselves bracing for a crash. Circumstances seem hopeless. But whatever the situation, we can discover the incredible truth that Jesus is Lord. Our God is in control and in charge.

4. **Remain hopeful.** There are many competing philosophies in the world, but when it all boils down, there are really just two: hope and despair. Without Jesus Christ and His Word, all other philosophies ultimately end in existential gloom.

The exciting thing about the promise of Jesus' coming is that He can return at any moment. He may not come for 10 years, but He could come today. As followers of Jesus, we can get up every morning and say, "Perhaps today." Perhaps today may be the day Jesus comes.

This is our hope. In the end, it's our only hope. I once heard someone say, "Life with Christ is an endless hope, without Him a hopeless end." Make sure you have Jesus and are looking forward to an endless hope when He comes.

5. **Reach Out to others.** When we're surrounded by trouble and filled with fear about the future, we can easily succumb to self-focus and living a self-absorbed life. All our time and energy can be exhausted on ourselves.

In all the things we do as we await the coming of Christ, nothing is more important and urgent than spreading the message of the gospel. Jesus can come at any moment, and the multiplying signs indicate His coming could be very soon.

According to many sources, the gospel is expanding rapidly in the Middle East, especially Iran. Many believe the church in Iran is currently the fastest-growing segment of the church in the world. As the Iranian people see firsthand the

emptiness of Islam and the darkness of the mullah regime, they're turning in droves to the light of the gospel.

May the Lord help us continue to pray for the Iranian people, and all those in the Middle East, and for the Christian workers who are laboring there in difficult and dangerous circumstances to bring them the gospel of Jesus Christ. Time may be short. {eoa}

Mark Hitchcock *has authored over 30 books related to Bible prophecy. He has earned Th.M. and Ph.D. degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary and is an associate professor there. He lives in Edmond, Oklahoma, with his wife, Cheryl, and serves as senior pastor of Faith Bible Church. He and his wife have two married sons and three grandchildren.*