

The End Times: Happily Ever After or a Horror Flick?

Have you ever been confused by the book of Revelation? Beasts. Scorpions. Dragons. Angels with swords. It sounds like a crazy horror movie.

One of the most mysterious subjects in the Bible is eschatology—the study of the end times. The book of Revelation is filled with mystical prophetic language of apocalyptic predictions. It speaks of a dragon being chained for a thousand years and angry angels given destructive assignments against the earth.

Not to mention beasts and dragons revealed in the midst of incredible angels that encircle the throne of grace. Then there are the golden streets and pearly gates, contrasted with years of tribulation, the mark of the beast and other subjective dark imagery.

Theologians have argued over these mystical predictions for nearly 2000 years, created charts and set dates for the end of the world. They have come up with complicated theories and complex names to explain each of their eschatological perspectives on the end times. While these bright minds argue over the outcomes of the last days, we are still left with many questions.

I, for one, think we're moving towards a happily ever after rather than a horror flick. At the end of the day, there are at least eight keys to help us process through the subject (not mystical predictions that need to be interpreted for clarification):

1. Scripture is unclear on several ideas regarding the end times. We have to be OK with this. For example, when Jesus died on the cross, He defeated the devil once and for all. So

how do we hold that truth in tension with the dark imagery we find in the book of Revelation? There is no black-and-white answer to this, so we have to hold onto what we do know is true. We must rest in the truth that darkness is defeated, and it won't be victorious in the future.

2. We must learn to live with mystery and realize there are some things we will never understand until God reveals them to us. People who have an answer for every verse in the book of Revelation simply don't know what they're talking about. Their so-called "wisdom" makes them feel intelligent, and they use their make-believe answers to intimidate those who refuse to take theological stands on things that are obviously not clear. Mystery is better than false wisdom.

3. Jesus gave the church authority over all the powers of the enemy, and He put them under our feet. Period. End of story. In other words, we have power over beasts, scorpions, antichrists and dragons. So we don't run from them; they run from us.

4. Jesus gave us authority to make disciples of all nations. This is one of the signs of the end times (Matt. 24:14). It was actually prophesied to Abraham when God said, "you shall be the father of a multitude of nations" (Gen. 17:4). God intends for the children of Abraham to be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. This promise was ratified when Jesus said to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19a). So in the great and glorious end times (Acts 2:20), we will have made disciples of all nations.

5. Jesus instructed us to pray it would "be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10b). This is the Messiah's mandate. This is also our responsibility as we go into the end times. Imagine a world that looks more like heaven than it does now. Now that's an end- times vision that aligns with the goodness of the God I know and love.

6. Isaiah, chapter 2, says, “In the last days, people will no longer train for war and nation will not rise up against nation ever again (Is. 2:4). One of the signs of the end times is that people don’t train for war. So when people are saying there will be “wars and rumors of wars,” in the end times they must recognize that we’ve had that already. We haven’t come to the end of our days because not every prophecy is fulfilled. We’re still waiting to see a world without wars.

7. It’s also reported that in the last days, God will pour out His spirit upon all flesh (Acts 2:17), resulting in a mass, worldwide revival. It’s then safe to say we will have mass revival before the end times. How exciting is that?

8. Jesus is not returning for an old, powerless hag but for a beautiful bride who “has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). Then He is making earth His capital planet by bringing the heavenly Jerusalem down to the planet (Rev. 21:2). He will dwell among men and wipe away all their tears (Rev. 21:3-4). This is an earthly reality, not a heavenly promise.

What we think about the end has everything to do with how we behave in the middle. So we must align our thinking regarding our end-times beliefs with truth, so that our behavior in the now is that of responsibility and hope.

Is it possible that things are getting better in the world? The Bible says that there will be no end to the increase of God’s government or of peace (Is. 9:7).

What if things are evolving instead of eroding? Clear mandates from God should always trump mystical revelations that are open to subjective interpretation until they’re revealed by the Spirit of God. Hold onto these biblical truths and mandates as you learn about end times. Although some mysteries will remain mysterious, invite Holy Spirit to speak to you regarding these matters. Have hope! We have a responsibility to go from glory to glory instead of from glory to disaster.

What gets you excited about the end times? How do you see yourself taking responsibility for our mandate to make disciples of all nations? {eo}

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