

Week 23 – Solid Facts About the End Times

Solid Facts about the End Times

Although there are disagreements in the church over what will happen before Christ returns, there will be no disagreements in the church after He comes again. Speculating about the end times is usually a futile thing. Let's focus on what we know for sure. What do we know for certain about the end times?

Christ is coming again!

His Second Coming (Greek "parousia" – appearing, manifestation) will be in person, visible and in great glory (Matthew 24:30; Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7). His coming is our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) and when He appears we shall be gloriously transformed into His likeness (1 John 3:2-3). This event will be the grand finale of human history.

Nobody knows for certain when He will return.

Scripture clearly tells us that we will not know when He will come (Matthew 24:27, 36; Mark 13:32-33). Thus, we should not be given to speculation or any efforts to date His coming (the "dating game").

At His return, God's people will be glorified.

They will receive a glorified body (1 Corinthians 15:35-57) and will dwell in the presence of the Lord forever (Revelation 21:3). All wrongs will be made right and pain, sorrow, and death will be removed (Revelation 21:1, 3-5, 22:3).

Preceding Christ's return, some scholars anticipate both negative and positive signs of His coming.

Negative signs:

· The destabilization of society at large (Matthew 24). · Apostasy of many so-called "Christians" (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 11).

· The Antichrist also called the beast, the man of perdition and the man of lawlessness, will rise to a place of power (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10; 1 John 2:18).

God's children were told not to fear these negative signs: "But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one" (2 Thessalonians 3:3). There is a special promise of

protection for God's church. Although this promise is sure, it does include the high calling of martyrdom for some.

Positive signs:

- Israel as a nation will have experienced a restoration (Luke 21:23-24) as well as an unprecedented influx of conversions of Jewish people (Romans 11:25-27). It may be noted that on May 14, 1948, the scattered Israelites drew back together and in one day became a nation again. In 1967, the city of Jerusalem was reclaimed by the Jews and was later declared to be "the eternal and indivisible capital of Israel and of the Jewish people" by the Knesset.
- The gospel of the kingdom of God will be preached in the whole world; every nation will have heard the gospel preached (Matthew 24:14).
- The church, called the Bride (Ephesians 5:27), will have made herself ready.
- The period of restoration will be fulfilled (Acts 3:19-21) implying a certain amount of progress of God's kingdom and His church in the earth.

Immediately following Christ's coming there will be specific and certain events according to Scripture.

- Dramatic changes will occur (2 Peter 3:8-13). There will be "a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away" (Revelation 21:1)
- God's ultimate plan will be revealed to all (Ephesians 1:10). Jesus Christ will prevail as Lord and King over all (Acts 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26). All of God's enemies will be destroyed forever and our Lord Jesus alone will be worshipped.
- The marriage of the Lamb will occur: "Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready" (Revelation 19:6). Thus, Christ will be eternally united to His Bride the church and we will be rejoicing in heaven for eternity.

God gave us this information to help us keep focused on the main thing – serving Jesus faithfully until He returns. In Luke 19, Jesus gives us a parable about investing in His works on earth the talents He's given us. In that parable, the master (symbolic of Himself) who is going away charges His servants: "Do business with this [the money He gave them] until I come back" (Luke 19:13). "Do business" in that passage could also be rendered from the original Greek (pragmateuzetai) as "occupy."

Thus, we are not to retreat out of fear or laziness, but rather we are to serve God and occupy until He returns. Any discussion about the issues of end times should be held in a spirit of love rather than dogmatism (1 Corinthians 13:12) and with an eye for accomplishing His will while the earth remains. There is too much to be accomplished for God's children to be speculating endlessly over end-time events.

Review

1. What is the "Grand Finale" of human history according to 1 John 3:2-3?
2. Name some of the negative signs of Christ's return.
3. name some of the positive signs of Christ's return.
4. What spirit should characterize any discussion of the end times?