



The Bible & Current Events

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Note: Scripture used in this Bible Study is from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

Agenda

Warm-up (my testimony)... Why a study of the Bible and Current events is so important to me.

Assumptions... What we must all agree on to appreciate any study of the Bible, especially Bible prophecy.

End-Time Time-Line... We will discuss an overview of some of the major events that are associated with the Lord's return.

End-Times Themes... We will take a look at the major categories of signs that indicate that Jesus is returning soon.

Warm-up (my testimony)

How do you deal with all the bad news stories?

It is easy to get depressed by what is reported in the news. But the more bad news we hear, the more it should bring to mind how this world sorely needs the return of the Lord. Titus 2:13 calls the return of Jesus our "*blessed hope*" because this is when His followers will be resurrected. Jesus promised to return in John 14:3, "*I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am*" (NIV).

What news have you heard that has changed your life?

I actually find the news very interesting because it provides so much evidence that we are growing closer to the day Jesus will return. Indeed, this is what led me to the Jesus in the first place... At the end of 1989, the Soviet Union allowed the Berlin Wall to be dismantled. This event amazed and mystified me because I expected the nuclear stand-off between the U.S. and the Soviets to go on indefinitely. But Revelation 13:7 says that when the Messiah returns, the world will be united under one government. It became clear to me that the super-power stand-off had to be dissolved for this to take place.

How should we regard the Bible if it helps us see how current events relate to the return of Christ?

If the Bible could help me understand why current events happened the way they did, then it also has to be right about the need for Jesus Christ in my life. When I realized this, it was like a light going on in my head. I knew at that instant my life would be forever changed. I immediately started digging into what else the Bible had to say about God's purpose and plan for us.

What kinds of current events reveal that we are getting close to the return of Jesus?

There are signs in nature, in society, in politics and we'll talk about all of these during the course of our study. But the most significant developments telling we are close to the return of the Lord involve the nation of Israel. The Bible has many prophecies that Israel will return to their homeland in the time-frame prior to the return of the Messiah. For example Ezekiel 36:24 says, "*I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land*" (NIV). This is pretty incredible when you consider that Israel ceased to be a nation in 70 A.D. being dispersed throughout the nations of the world until they became a nation again in 1948. There are many other amazing things the Bible has to say about the events associated with the return of Jesus Christ to earth. The more we learn about the se, the more we can appreciate how the stage is already set for the Lord's return.

Why should we study Bible prophecy?

It helps us get excited about God's Word when we see it relevance to our day. This helps bring us closer to Jesus and gives us a sense of urgency to fulfill our purpose in life.

Assumptions

In order to better appreciate this introduction to Bible prophecy, there are three assumptions that need to be accepted to get the most out of this discussion...

1. God is Almighty
2. God created us for a purpose
3. God's Word is true

What does it mean that God is Almighty?

Revelation 19:6 - Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns! (NIV)

God is sovereign and there is nothing that He can not do except to act contrary to His own nature. The Bible does not present God as having set everything in motion at the

creation then sat back to watch history unfold. God is in control and is actively involved in His creation.

How does accepting God's Almighty nature help us to see that His prophecies about what will happen in the future are 100% accurate?

Isaiah 46:9-10 - Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' God is outside the confines of time. Time is just one more dimension that He created to give us a context for our lives. Time is one of the ways we relate to the universe. God created the universe but He Himself is not constrained by His own creation. So it follows that whatever God says will happen, will happen...

What is special about people in God's creation?

Genesis 1:27 - So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
The creation of men and women is special because God created us for a purpose... we are different from the rest of creation in that we are made in the image of God...

What does it mean that we are in the image of God?

As God has a triune nature, three persons in one Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; we too are a triunity: soul, body, and spirit. The Bible describes God as being one yet three distinct persons who make up the Godhead, for example:

Matthew 28:19 - Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Likewise, the Bible represents people as being comprised of three aspects, the body is that part of us which relates to the world, the soul is our inner personality, the seat of our emotions and thoughts, the spirit is that part of us which has the ability to commune with God and includes our conscience...

1Thessalonians 5:23 - Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The most relevant aspect of being made in the image of God for the purpose of our discussion is that people have a free will. Like God, all people have a will whereby we can alter the course of our lives by the choices we make.

Why did God give us a free will to make our own choices?

There is an important reason why God gave us a free will, so that we may freely choose out of our own volition to enter into a relationship with Him. **What kind of a relationship can**

you have with a robot that is programmed to do what you tell it to? It would be a pretty superficial relationship, not very satisfying and probably downright boring. God wants to have a deep relationship with His creation and this is only possible if we were created free to accept or reject Him.

The most profound discovery a person can make is to learn the basic reason why God brought them into the world. Why did God create people?

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
God created us so that we may have an eternal relationship with Him. To know God is to love Him and glorify Him for who He is.

What keeps people from having a relationship with God?

Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
People are born separated from God because our human nature is to think and act selfishly which the Bible characterizes as sin.

What happens to those who refuse a relationship with God?

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death
The Bible tells us that if we spend our lives being comfortable in our sinful condition separated from God that this has eternal consequences. This life is a test to see who will accept God and His Way for eternal life and who will reject Him. Those who reject God in this life will receive the eternity they voted for by being separated from their Creator for all eternity.

What provision did God make for us so that we could enter into a relationship with Him?

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
But God did make a way for us to have an eternal relationship with Him. God Himself came in the form of one of His creations to pay the penalty for our sin by dying on the cross for those who would let Him into their lives...

How should we respond to God's offer of a relationship with Him?

Romans 10:9 - if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
God has made it possible for people to have a relationship with Him in the death of Jesus Christ. The ball is now in our court to respond. For a relationship to happen, there must be cooperation between both parties. God has already done His part in sending His only Son, Jesus Christ. All we

need to do is respond to Him by believing this. This is a promise that you can apply to your life right now. Right where you're sitting you can exercise your free will to enter into an eternal relationship with God...

- Just speak to God in your thoughts telling Him that you agree with Him that you are a sinner and need His forgiveness... Tell Him that you believe that Jesus paid the penalty for your sin and rose from the dead... and ask Him to save you from the consequences of your sin...
- If you are sincere in that prayer, God will save you from your sin...
Acts 16:31 - Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved

All right, we have one more assumption...

God's Word is true... If God wants a personal relationship with us, how does He speak to us?

God speaks to us in a variety of ways, in circumstances that are beyond coincidence, in our spirits, through other people, and through the Bible.

Of all the ways God speaks to us, why is the Bible the most important?

The Bible is the resource God has given us to know Him. This means we can use the Bible to authenticate all the other ways God speaks to us to determine if what we think is from God is truly from Him. Without something outside ourselves like the Bible, we do not have a way to tell if our thoughts are from God or only our own. God can not contradict Himself and if He is telling us something in our thoughts, these thoughts must be consistent with what He tells us in His Word, the Bible.

How can we know that the Bible is truly God's Word, that we should trust it to accurately present the truth?

2 Timothy 3:16 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

I know that I can trust the Bible as being true due to the character of God Himself. If God is truly Almighty as He would need to be to create the universe, He is Almighty enough to accurately bring us His Word and preserve it through time even using His error-prone creation.

About a third of the Bible is prophecy. Old Testament prophets generally authenticated that they spoke for God in that their near-term prophecies were fulfilled and thus you can trust their long-term prophecies to be from God as well. Some of the Old Testament writers had miracles associated with them which authenticated they were truly speaking for God. And this is how the early church knew who God was speaking through when the New Testament was written as well.

Another reason that we can trust the Bible as being from God is the purpose behind the creation. God created us for a purpose, so that we may know Him. It follows then that God would make a way for us to know Him and the Bible plays a key role in that.

There are many Bible translations, how can we know which one is correct?

There are many translations of the Bible but they all say the same thing in different ways.

Do Christians have to accept the Bible as being true on blind-faith?

No, God gives believers the proof they need to show them that the Bible is true. In my own case, a struggle I had when I was a new Christian was the Genesis account of the creation. The Bible said that God accomplished the creation in 6 days. As an engineer who had studied science all my life, I just assumed that evolution had to be true and so I rationalized that God used an evolutionary process to bring about the creation. This meant that the six days of creation had to be six eons of time. The problem I had with this is that if I started having to understand the Bible by applying some meaning to it other than what it clearly says, were does this stop? If everything in the Bible needs to be interpreted to mean something other than what it says, how can I believe anything the Bible says?

As I was struggling with this, the Lord led me to learn about creation science, there really is proof of the Genesis account of creation. For example, the very fact that there are fossils all over the world is proof of a world-wide flood. It takes a large-scale traumatic event like the flood to create fossils because silt has to rapidly be washed over the organisms. Without such an event things just rot away without forming fossils.

It was so exciting to me to come to the understanding that I could trust the Bible as being true without having some learned scholar to interpret it for me.

Why are atheists among those who really have blind faith?

People who believe that matter is eternal and that people came into being as a result of blind, random processes over eons of time indeed have to take this on blind-faith since there is no proof of it. It takes a lot of faith to believe there was no Creator. There is a lot more proof for a Creator... if there is a creation, there had to be a Creator. The big bang and evolution are only controversial theories that are not supported by the evidence. The big bang theorists can not explain why the galaxies are actually accelerating apart and evolutionists have to make excuses for the second law of thermodynamics. Also, the irreducible complexity we see among God's creatures show that we have a Grand Designer.

God intended the Bible to be understood by anybody without a degree in theology. There are a couple basic principles that will serve us well as we dig into some of the deeper things the Bible has to say to us:

What is context and why is it important?

It is interesting to note that you can make the Bible say anything you want it to say if you take a passage out of context. So to correctly understand what a particular verse is saying, its meaning must be consistent with the larger passage in which it is found. It should also be noted that the meaning of a passage must be consistent with the rest of Scripture. There are no contradictions in Scripture because God can not contradict Himself. There may well be apparent contradictions but these are really gaps in our understanding. Now there may also be translation issues but these are always minor in their scope and so infrequent that you can just about ignore them.

Why is it important to take the Bible as literally as possible?

God wants us to have a personal relationship with Him so He made it possible for us to know the main and plain things we need to know without help. The best way to do this is to take the Bible literally. A lot of people neglect prophecy because they think that it is all symbolic and has to be interpreted. But when we look at the prophecies of the first coming of Christ that was fulfilled, we see that they were fulfilled literally. So the obvious conclusion is that the prophecies about His second coming will literally be fulfilled as well.

- Now there is symbolism in the Bible that does need to be interpreted but this is the same as in any literature, the symbolism is obvious. And in most cases the Bible itself explains the symbolism.

If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense or you'll end up with nonsense.

Alright with this introduction out of the way, let's take a look at some prophecy...

End-Time Time-Line

What will happen when Jesus returns?

Revelation 19:11,15-16 - ¹¹I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war... ¹⁵Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (NIV)

Most people think of the time of judgment that comes on the earth. When Jesus returns to earth, He puts an end to the war of Armageddon, conquering the nations that came together in opposition to Him.

Why does the Church look forward to the return of Jesus?

We will not have to suffer the brunt of God's anger that culminates in the return of Jesus.

1 Thess 5:9 - For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV)

Instead, God will take us to be with Him. As Jesus came/will come to earth in two phases: (1) a suffering servant and (2) a conquering King... He will return in two phases: (1) for the church and (2) in judgment.

How do we know Jesus is going to come back?

John 14:1-3 - Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Jesus told His disciples that He was going to depart by way of the cross and then He promised to come back. This is a promise for us today. Today's disciples are those who put their trust in Jesus for their salvation and follow Him.

When will Jesus return?

Matthew 24:42 - Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

We don't know so we need to always be ready. However, we can know the season of the Lord's return because He has given us signs to watch for...

1 Thes 5:4 - But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

What should we be watching for?

Titus 2:13 - looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ

We should be living our life in such a way that we are ready and watching for Jesus to return at any moment.

So what happens when the Lord returns?

Philippians 3:20-21 - For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

We will receive permanent, incorruptible bodies so that we may spend eternity in the presence of the Lord. Jesus promised:

John 14:3 – I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (NIV)

What is the blessed hope of the church?

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 – For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

The blessed hope of the church is seeing the Lord when we are transformed to have an eternal body like His...

1 John 3:2 – we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (NIV)

The Rapture of the church is our being “caught-up” to be with Him. The term “rapture” comes from the Latin term for “caught-up.”

Please note that Christ meets the church in the air at the rapture. This is different than His return to earth in glory to set up His Kingdom. So it is clear that the rapture and His second coming are two separate events.

What did Jesus tell us would be a sign of His soon return?

Matthew 24:21 - there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Jesus told us to watch for a number of signs that we will talk about during the course of this study. But all these are associated with a 7-year period of time directly preceding His return called the Tribulation. Now the church will not be on earth during this terrible time but we can see the stage being set for the Tribulation. For example:

Matthew 14:7-8 - Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. (NIV)

Birth pains increase in frequency and intensity as we approach the main event. We see these birth pains today. It is easy for even the casual observer to look at the course of events in our day and conclude that a culmination must be coming soon. Trends simply can not continue as they are without some sort of resolution taking place. The Bible tells us what that resolution is.

What will happen after Jesus returns?

Revelation 20:4 - And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Those who opposed God will be killed and Jesus will establish His own kingdom and rule the earth from Jerusalem. We will be with Him in our resurrected bodies...

John 14:3 – I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (NIV)

This will be an amazing time when mortal people continue to populate the earth and immortal saints comprise the government. There are several Bible passages that give us insight into what it will be like during the millennial reign of Christ.

What happens after the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth?

Revelation 21:3-4 - "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (NIV)

There is a Great White throne judgment where those who were never born again are sent away from God in a place of eternal punishment. Then God ushers in the eternal state recreating heaven and earth. He will set up His permanent shop on the earth in a new Jerusalem with His resurrected people. We will spend eternity getting to know God better and using our creative gifts to glorify Him.

End Times Themes

Since I have been aware of the events related to the return of Jesus, I've found the news very interesting. There is always something in the news that helps us see that we are getting ever closer to the Lord. We will delve more deeply into these signs of the times during the course of our future discussions on the Bible and current events. At this point, all we really have time to do is to consider the major categories or themes for the signs of the times...

What end-time trend is represented by Luke 21:25-26?

Luke 21:25-26 - And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.

The course of natural events heralds the soon return of Jesus. I believe that the perceived global warming is a sign of the times.

What end-time trend is represented by Matthew 24:12?

Matthew 24:12 - And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Society will get worse and worse. God is removing His restraint on mankind's sinfulness to help us see our need for Jesus. What makes the Tribulation so bad is that God will let mankind have our way without Him which will result in the closest thing to hell on earth that there will ever be.

II Th 2:7 - For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

What end-time trend is represented by Daniel 12:4?

Daniel 12:4 - But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.

Technology – The Bible describes many things that could not be understood in the time that they were written but can easily be understood today. In times past the events associated with the Lord's return could only be seen as being supernatural. While there will be supernatural events associated with the Lord's return, most can actually come to pass by natural means. This is consistent with how God operates giving those who would deny Him an excuse to go on denying Him.

II Th 2:9-12 - The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

What end-time trend is represented by Revelation 13:7?

Revelation 13:7 - It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Politics – The Bible says there will be a one-world government in the time prior to Christ returning.

What end-time trend is represented by Joel 3:9-10?

Joel 3:9-10 - Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, "I am strong!" (NIV)

We are now in a new era where the weakling says "I am strong." This passage describes terrorism. Note that turning plowshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears is taking peaceful tools of productivity and turn them into weapons. This is what terrorists do by turning passenger airliners into guided missiles and deceived people into suicide bombers.

- Note that this passage in context is talking about events leading up to the battle of Armageddon which is referred to in Joel as "the Valley of Jehoshaphat." The

battle of Armageddon is the last event that happens before the Lord returns.

What end-time trend is represented by Revelation 13:7?

James 5:1-4 - Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look!

The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you.

Finances – The Bible says the wealth that people trust in for their deliverance will become worthless in the end times. We see more examples of people being exploited where there is a greater division between the wealthy and poor.

What end-time trend is represented by Ezekiel 37:21?

Ezekiel 37:21 - "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;'"

There will be significant signs associated with the nation of Israel – This is the number one sign of the end-times. We will have a lot more to say about this in our coming discussions.

Next: The Olivet Discourse