

Step #3

BURNING QUESTIONS

Important Note:

Some people believe that the “last days” scriptures refer to the complete destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. Indeed, many of these scriptures do accurately describe the events preceding and during this desolation, a time of profound sorrow for the Jews for it caused the annihilation of the system of law (the Mosaic law, or law of Moses) that they followed at the time. With the temple records entirely destroyed along with the temple, the Jews (who are not a race but are, rather, a portion of the descendants of Abraham) could no longer fulfill the requirements for sacrifices and other operations of the law. God came upon the city of Jerusalem with great wrath in return for rejecting His Son (although the Christians heeded God’s warnings and escaped in time), and to prove that the Mosaic Covenant had been done away with.

The relevance of many of the following scriptures to the time of 70 AD does not, however, undermine the significance of the return of Jesus Christ. Even if many of the prophecies (by the Old Testament prophets, Jesus, the apostles, and even in Revelation) refer to events already fulfilled, the second coming of the Lord Jesus is still a prominent feature of the Bible message. The Lord would not have us wrestle with all kinds of “end times” theories, nor would He have us become obsessed with His coming to the point where we become unproductive in our lifetime. Our mandate is to simply glorify His name upon this earth as we walk in God’s ways and enjoy His blessings, ready to share the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ at every opportunity.

The Bible tells us that no man knows when Jesus will return. It also warns against scriptural debates that can destabilize us, or send us off on tangents that will cloud our mandate:

Mark 12: 32, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”

2 Peter 3: 16, “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest,” (wrestle) “as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

2 Corinthians 11: 3, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

The overall picture – which should be our overall message - is that we all have an opportunity to be reconciled with God through Jesus, and that something amazing will happen in the future when those that are in Christ will be rewarded and those that have rejected Him will suffer. So, while the following article shares one common understanding of future events, it’s not imperative that you understand and promote - or even agree with - every detail.

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

(Matthew 24: 6-8)

These signs of the times are nothing new to our generation. In fact, they've been occurring for so many years that many people are becoming numb to them. Others are growing so disheartened by these ongoing tragedies that their faith in a loving God is severely waning.

If there is a God, is it His fault?

Mankind is quick to accept credit for his own achievements, but he is generally not willing to accept responsibility for his wrongdoings. In our courts of law, every accused person is given the opportunity to defend his own self. If we want to accuse God of allowing evil things to happen to mankind, we must also allow God to speak in defense. God's defense is written in the Bible.

God has given every person a free will to choose how he will lead his life. It is by these choices that man causes evil to come upon man:

Genesis 6: 5, “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Mark 7: 21-23, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.”

These scriptures apply to both the aggressor and the victim alike. It is by man's choice that he descends upon another with evil intent, and it is also by man's choice to live in sin that he forfeits the protection of God.

“Sin” is a state of being, first invited into the lives of man by the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Under the Old Testament agreement, people were required to strictly follow a set of laws (not just the ten commandments) in order to remain in right standing with God. Under the New Covenant, God offers a specific, tangible way to be cleansed of this state of “walking in the flesh” and to be reunited with Him. Yet, most people have rejected God's instructions; instead, they have substituted their own self-

righteousness, their own self-made doctrines:

Romans 10: 2-3, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Matthew 15: 8-9, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Ephesians 4: 14, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;"

Hebrews 13: 9, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines..."

2 Timothy 4: 3-4, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

2 Timothy 3: 1-5, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

These people continue to live in sin, yet they refuse to recognize it. This does not refer to just the "alternative" religions of today. It ashamedly applies to all the self-proclaimed Christians who openly proclaim the name of Jesus Christ yet have not done His Father's will:

Matthew 7: 21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Matthew 24: 4-5, "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

The countries of the world worship false idols and false prophets. In the United States, there is a Christ-professing church on virtually every street corner, yet most are leading their congregations astray. Supposed God-fearing nations are encouraging free worship in the name of multiculturalism. No one can blame God for what future may befall mankind.

Our current world is fragile

We live in a very different time in the history of the world. It has only been in the last century that technology has dramatically changed man's life to the point where he now has the power to completely destroy life on the entire planet. Scientists have proven that in the event of a major nuclear exchange, the atmosphere would be so filled with dust and smoke that it would block out the sun for months, causing the temperature of the planet to drop drastically. This would trigger a chain reaction of other devastating and deadly events.

Many argue that a full-scale nuclear war would never happen because rational thinking would cause the people in control of these arsenals to never use them. The one thing we must understand, though, is that in many cases we are not dealing with rational thinkers. We are dealing with emotionally driven human beings.

There are many who believe the western way of life must be destroyed from the face of the earth. Diplomacy, or military might on behalf of the United States, will not change this thinking (though it may keep it subdued for a time). Even small countries can wholeheartedly believe they have the might to make a stand against a large power like the United States. As Joel 3: 10 says, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong."

There IS worse to come

Whether or not we choose to accept the idea that mankind might one day engage for a third time in a world war does not change the fact that things occur that are out of our control. Not many people were ever expecting to see the World Trade Center toppled in such a horrendous way on September 11, 2001, but it still happened. If you had somehow foreseen the entire situation and found yourself running around trying to warn others of the impending doom, you may have found very few who would believe you. Noah experienced likewise with the flood, a foreshadowing of a time to come:

Matthew 24: 35-42, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," (living together as if married) "until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

The Bible contains a multitude of prophecies that have come true on every account. It also clearly tells us of a time in the future that will be more tragic than has ever before come upon the earth. However, the majority of people will not accept this as truth because they have not seen it beforehand. They also do not want to believe it could be true simply because it is too frightening a concept to imagine.

Some speculate that the disaster to soon befall mankind will not involve a nuclear war but, rather, a natural cause such as a mega asteroid impact, or even a mega volcanic eruption. This is possible; the catastrophic results of all three would be very similar. Yet, one would be wise not to waste time on debating the cause but, rather, preparing for the event that will immediately follow the great tribulation: Jesus Christ's return.

Don't live in selective ignorance; rest in hope

The message of the Bible cannot be invalidated merely because most people today have decided not to accept its warnings. And the warnings are a multitude:

Malachi 4: 1, "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

Zephaniah 1: 15-17, "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD..."

Isaiah 13: 10, "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."

Zechariah 14: 12, "And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth."

Joel 2: 30-31, "And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars" (palm trees) "of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come."

2 Peter 3: 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

1 Thessalonians 5: 3, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

Revelation 9: 18, "By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone," (fumes) "which issued out of their mouths."

Revelation 16: 18, "And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great."

Other scriptures describe in detail the devastating after affects. There will be no place to hide:

Joel 1: 16-20 & 2: 1-2, "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness. Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of

clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains...”

Jeremiah 25: 31-33, “A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.”

Job 38: 22-23, “Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?”

Revelation 16: 20-21, “And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.”

The gospels are also full of warnings:

Luke 21: 11, “And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.”

Matthew 24: 21-22, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”

Mark 13: 8 & 24-26, “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows... But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.”

This last verse provides welcome assurance to those of a contrite and humble heart toward the living God, as does the following:

Matthew 24: 30-31, “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect

from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

1 Corinthians 15: 51-52, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

1 Thessalonians 4: 15-18, “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

1 Kings 9: 5, “Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.”

Luke 1: 32, “He” (Jesus) “shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:”

We can plainly see that the Bible is telling mankind there is a time of trouble coming that has not previously been seen upon the face of the earth. However, we are also told that Jesus Christ will return again to the earth immediately following this time, to rule and reign with righteousness. The royal throne and lineage of King David is still in place today through Queen Elizabeth II, though a few thousand years have passed since God’s promise of its everlasting establishment. Somehow, Jesus will take up this throne upon his return.

“Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2: 40)

Many people today are put off by the term “salvation,” but it is scriptural. God has offered us all an opportunity to escape the certain destruction that man will bring upon himself. We discussed the fullness of this opportunity in Step #1 followed by the specifics of the born again experience in Step #2.

Life is a fragile and temporary thing. If you’re already a Christian (born again through water baptism and the Holy Spirit anointing) at this stage, you should be aching to share this very message with those you love – *and* those whom God tells you to love (which is *everyone!*) Tell them, “This is your chance to become a son or daughter of the living God. Don’t pass this opportunity by because of past misconceptions about the Bible, or because of bad ‘religious’ experiences. In the face of all the facts both in the news and in the Bible, don’t leave your future to

chance!”

What about the future and life after death?

There is not a “heaven” and a “hell” in the context that many man-made religions believe. That is, when you die, you don’t (as is commonly assumed) either “go to heaven” or “go to hell.” When we examine the Bible, we understand that God’s plan for the future is more complex than this, and even then we only know in part (1 Corinthians 13: 12, “For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known”).

This “age” (time period) is the time God has appointed for the building of the Body of Christ, the one and only Church, or “ekklesia” in the Biblical Greek language which means “a calling out”. The new age (being the New Covenant) began on the day of Pentecost with the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit and it will continue until Jesus returns to be united with these called members of His Body:

I Thessalonians 4: 16, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ” (members of the Body of Christ) “shall rise first: Then we which are alive” (in Christ) “and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (Note that here Paul is writing to the church at Thessalonica whose members had been baptized into the Body of Christ through water baptism and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it’s incorrect to assume the words “we which are alive and remain” refer to mankind in general.)

Matthew 24: 27 & 30-31 & 37, “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be...then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other...But as the days of Noe” (Noah) “were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Jesus shall be united with His Body for a purpose. Revelation 20: 6 describes that “they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Note that no one knows if this span of time will be literal or not).

Revelation 20: 3 explains that Satan will be bound during this time period “that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

The same chapter explains that those who are not raised to be united with Christ upon His return will remain asleep until the end of the age (time period) of freedom from evil influence: “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished,” (Revelation 20: 5). The next verse is interesting as it explains how blessed the members of the Body of Christ will be to partake in the first resurrection (uniting with Christ in His kingdom) because they will not be judged on the Day of Judgment to come. Essentially, their judgment will come when they are found worthy to be raised with Christ upon His second coming: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power,” (Revelation 20: 6).

Revelation Chapter 20 goes on to describe the battle that will follow Satan’s release, and God’s final destruction of evil. Next will come the Day of Judgment when all others (i.e. everyone other than those who will already be in the Kingdom) who have ever walked the earth will be brought to stand before God to be judged according to the way they conducted themselves while they lived. Of these “others,” those who are judged worthy will enter into the Kingdom of God at this point:

Revelation 20: 13, “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” (Note that there are different words and meanings for “hell” in the Bible. In this scripture, the word “hell” comes from the Greek word “hades” which means “grave”.)

Revelation 20: 12, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

Following this, scripture describes the second death when death and hell (hades, or grave) will be cast into the lake of fire along with all those whose names are not found written in the book of life:

Revelation 20: 14-15, “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

No one knows the criteria that these “others” will be judged by. We do know that everyone who lived prior to the New Testament age will be included in this judgment because they lived prior to the opportunity to be baptized (by water and the Holy Spirit) into the Body of Christ, and it is reasonable to expect (given solid scriptural evidence) that the names of the mighty, faithful servants of the Lord mentioned in the Old Testament (such as Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Elijah) will be found in the book of life:

Matthew 8: 11, “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 17: 1-3, “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias” (Elijah) “talking with him.” (Note that this was simply a vision of a time to come; this scripture does not imply that Moses and Elijah are currently in the Kingdom of heaven with Jesus.)

NOTE: Also read the brief commentary on John the Baptist under Question #6 on the [“Get Answers”](#) page.

Nevertheless, it’s critical to remember that we’re now living in the New Testament age and every person is being given the remarkable opportunity to be born again (by water baptism and the Holy Spirit anointing) into the Body of Christ, and to continue in the ways of Jesus until He returns. **It would be foolish of anyone, having been made aware of this salvation opportunity (and expectation), to cast it aside, hoping to “take their chances” on the Day of Judgment:**

2 Peter 2: 21, “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”

Fuelling up for God

Inspiring others toward personal reconciliation with God takes spiritual energy, and in Step #4 we explore all kinds of fuel that we – as Christians (meaning “anointed ones”) - have free access to in order to get fired up and get going. Yet, fuelling up doesn’t just bring benefit to others. God wants His people to prosper

in every area of their lives – for their joy and for His glory. So, there's no surprise that everything we do in Jesus' name brings priceless reward our way, too!