

Time

What About the End?

The following headline, published by National Geographic on 10/28/2010, has worried many people. "Time Will End in Five Billion Years, Physicists Predict!" The article concludes with this statement, "The universe will cease to exist around the same time our sun is slated to die, according to new predictions based on the multiverse theory." This idea contrasts with those believing the universe has always existed and will continue to exist forever. Most people living day-to-day, not knowing what is in their future, do not care what will happen billions of years after they die. However, the serious-minded Bible believer asks as the disciples asked Jesus, *"When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"* (Matthew 24:3).

The scriptures say much about "the end." Various "end of" people, places, and things are explained in several parts of the Bible. Different time periods are described, along with the events that occur in those times. There is "the end" of captivity or a time relative to a part of God's unfolding revelation. The end of captivity in Egypt came when God sent Moses, as recorded in Exodus. The Babylonian captivity ended with the decree of Cyrus the Great as prophesied in Isaiah chapters 44 and 45 and fulfilled in 586 B. C. Jesus taught about the end of the Temple worship and sacrifices Matthew 24 and Luke 21. However, the primary concern will be when Jesus returns as He promised in John 14:2-3, and the angel spoke of in Acts 1:11. Paul refers to Christ's return this way; *"Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power* (1 Corinthians 15:23-24).

Two conditions should concern a Christian, and both have the same requirements to prepare for the events. One concern is the end of life for those who die before Christ returns. The second concern is the end of all humans, animals, plants, and matter in the universe when Christ returns. One statement expresses the requirement for preparation for either event. *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them"* (Revelation 14:13). The blessing is a spiritual life that lasts forever, regardless of what happens to the physical universe. Paul expresses the condition of those enslaved to a physical world and those freely serving God as His servants. *"For the outcome of those (material) things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:20-23). To be in Christ is to be blessed with eternal life. But to be with him throughout eternity, one must be in Him during this life.

Peter said, *"The end of all things is near"* (1 Peter 4:7). Peter made that statement nearly 2000 years ago, referring to the unknown timing of the event and the sudden appearance of Christ when He comes again. (James 5:9) indicates that Christ is standing at the door waiting for the word to come. Peter explains the reason for Christ's delay in coming this way *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!"* (2 Peter 3:9-12).

While the Lord is waiting, it is our time to prepare. God's great desire is for "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). The longer He waits, the greater the number of people who hear the truth, believe and obey it, and enter the new life in Christ through baptism. Those walking in the new life (Romans 6:3-7) free from sin and children of God are alive to God now in this world (Romans 6:11).

The resurrected Christ told the disciples, *"After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also"* (John 14:19). About thirty years later, Paul wrote to Timothy, *"It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us"* (2 Timothy 2:11-12). Paul, who devoted himself to Christ, was prepared to meet Him (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Are you prepared to meet Christ, The Son of God?