

End time

The end of the world has come!! Or has it ?

It seems that every generation at one time or another believed that the end of the world was near.

New Testament writers wrote of the coming of the Lord and that the end was near.

- Peter, Paul, James, John and Jude all made reference to being near the end and the Lord's soon return. (James 5:8; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18)
- Today is not much different. Some people are talking about the end of world, which is not surprising given our present situation with the COVID-19 pandemic impacting every nation on earth.

So, is this it? Are we really seeing the end of the world?

The simple answer is, no, however let's unpack this a little more.

To start with; Yes, I believe we are in the last days, as Peter declared on the day of Pentecost

"And it shall be in the last days,..." Acts 2:17

Now 2000 years on we are definitely in the last days of the last days. There is without doubt many signs telling us that we are rapidly coming closer to the end with every passing day.

But, in this presentation, instead on focusing on the signs of the end-time, which are many and increasing, and though they are important, I want to take the next few minutes and talk about the end-time church and what it is that we should be concentrating on.

Because, we were born for this moment!

However, before we get into the good stuff let me say this, "We must guard against becoming distracted, in times of turmoil and unrest."

Along with the real signs, there are also many other philosophies, theories and fanciful ideas abounding at this time.

We all love a great mystery, but please do not become distracted by them. Even folk with the best intentions can become preoccupied and lose sight of the essential things at this time.

1 Timothy 4:7 (TPT)

Be quick to abstain from senseless traditions and legends, but instead be engaged in the training of truth that brings righteousness.

And when we consider the various theories that are being spread around, including environmental disasters, and predictions of the world's natural order about to collapse etc, etc. What is the outcome they produce?

For many, it is fear, a sense of hopelessness and feelings of being completely helpless. I remember being a teenager in the mid 1960s, and the debilitating fear I experienced, even back then, with talk of the world's eco-systems collapsing. It left me feeling afraid, hopeless and helpless.

If that is you today, please don't listen to the world's imaginative and incorrect message of doom.

The Bible says: "Fear not" so let me say to you, "Do not let fear rule over you, in Jesus name."

None of the false predictions bring hope. These predictions are dark, dangerous and distracting. In fact they are antichrist in nature.

The finger prints of the devil are all over them. God is never considered in their equation. He is a forgotten entity and apparently powerless to do anything about the world coming to a catastrophic end.

Wrong, wrong, wrong! Our God has not given up on the world. He has a plan!

Psalms 33:11 (TPT)

His destiny-plan for the earth stands sure. His forever-plan remains in place and will never fail.

The Gospel, the Good News of the Kingdom of God, is always a message of hope, even in the midst of trauma, chaos, uncertainty and the end-time.

The Good News always points man towards an answer, never to a state of helplessness. God does not leave us hopeless. Christ is our living hope.

1 Peter 1:3 (TPT)

Celebrate with praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us his extravagant mercy. For his fountain of mercy has given us a new life—we are reborn to experience a living, energetic hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Christ in us is the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27 (TPT)

Living within you is the Christ who floods you with the expectation of glory! This mystery of Christ, embedded within us, becomes a heavenly treasure chest of hope filled with the riches of glory for his people, and God wants everyone to know it!

Exactly where we are in the timeline of these last days, I confess I don't know. And smarter minds than mine also struggle to accurately predict the time.

So here are two questions...

1. Should we be trying to predict the actual end-time? Jesus said:

Acts 1:7 (TPT)

He answered, "The Father is the one who sets the fixed dates and the times of their fulfillment. You are not permitted to know the timing of all that he has prepared by his own authority.

2. What is it that we should be focused on?

It's the answer to this second question that I want us to focus on today.

Jesus, speaking of the end times, exhorts us to "Endure."

Matthew 24:13

But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

I will come back to more of what Jesus said shortly.

There are numerous things I could say, but I have chosen, for this presentation, to speak from the apostle Peter's first letter.

The apostle Peter in chapter four of his first letter identifies four key factors that we should be focusing on, when, as he says...

"the end of all things is near."

Four key factors:

Please keep in mind that each one of the following four are whole subjects in themselves and deserving much deeper consideration than what we have time for in today's presentation.

Also we should note that these four factors **are not** simply theoretical positions, but **they are** works that disciples of Jesus Christ should pursue and practice.

- 1. Intentional prayer***

1 Peter 4:7 (TPT)

Since we are approaching the end of all things, be intentional, purposeful, and self-controlled so that you can be given to prayer.

A purpose driven life is a life dominated by prayer

It is the first thing we do and keep doing without ceasing

And it should be the last thing that we do

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NASB)
Pray without ceasing;

2. *Fervent love*

1 Peter 4:8 (TPT)
Above all, constantly echo God's intense love for one another, for love will be a canopy over a multitude of sins.

Love conquers all, protects and holds us all together in a bond of unity
Love is the defining factor that identifies us as disciples of Jesus Christ
Love is the one fruit of the Spirit

Hebrews 13:1 (TPT)
No matter what, make room in your heart to love every believer.

3. *Joyous hospitality*

1 Peter 4:9 (TPT)
Be compassionate to foreigners without complaining.

Caring for the needs of others is fundamental for disciples of Jesus Christ.
Hospitality and the support of strangers opens hearts to the Gospel.

Hebrews 13:2 (TPT)
And show hospitality to strangers,...

4. *Faithful Service*

1 Peter 4:10 (TPT)
Every believer has received grace gifts, so use them to serve one another as faithful stewards of the many-colored tapestry of God's grace.

Servanthood is the first and fundamental calling on each of our lives.
Jesus said that he did not come to be served, but to serve.
First and foremost I am a servant of Jesus Christ

Matthew 20:25-26 (TPT)
Jesus, knowing their thoughts, called them to his side and said, "Kings and those with great authority in this world rule oppressively over their subjects, like tyrants. 26 But this is not your calling. You will lead by a completely different model. The greatest one among you will live as the one who is called to serve others,

Then Peter adds the following, reminding us of the end goal,... to glorify God.

He writes:

1 Peter 4:11 (TPT)

For example, if you have a speaking gift, speak as though God were speaking his words through you. If you have the gift of serving, do it passionately with the strength God gives you, so that in everything God alone will be glorified through Jesus Christ. For to him belong the power and the glory forever throughout all ages! Amen.

My summing of that is:

- Speak boldly
- Serve enthusiastically
- Glorify God in everything

Finally

As I close, let's return to the words of Jesus:

Matthew 24:9-12 (TPT)

"You can expect to be persecuted, even killed; for you will be hated by all the nations because of your love for me. 10 Then many will stop following me and fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many lying prophets will arise, deceiving multitudes and leading them away from the path of truth. 12 There will be such an increase of sin and lawlessness that those whose hearts once burned with passion for God and others will grow cold.

Wow, that is a bleak picture and looking at the world today, one must agree, it is a pretty fair description of today's world.

Jesus does not leave us hopeless, He points us to a day of deliverance and salvation.

Matthew 24:13 (TPT)

But keep your hope to the end and you will experience life and deliverance.

Our God will not abandon us.

Psalms 48:14 (TPT)

Yes, this is our God, our great God forever. He will lead us onward until the end, through all time, beyond death, and into eternity!

So in these last days Jesus must remain the central figure of our life; He should never be moved from the centre, because if He is, we will become eccentric.

Eccentric you ask?

"A person of unconventional and slightly strange views or behaviour."

A wheel when the axle is not centred, causes the wheel to loop and not turn smoothly, that is eccentric.

Imagine this picture:

The clowns enter a circus arena riding in an old car and because the axle has not been placed in the centre the wheels loop and the car rocks and rolls, the clowns struggle to hold on and some fall off much to the amusement of the audience, filling the tent with their laughter.

If our centre is off, if it's not true, we too will find ourselves being laughed at, but it won't be for amusement, it will be for shame.

So what is our centre? What does our life revolved around?

It is Jesus Christ and the message of His coming Kingdom.

Jesus said, and our context is still the last days...

Matthew 24:14

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

I remember the graduation ceremony when I graduated from Bible College way back in 1972. The graduating students marched into the church singing the song, Prepare ye the way of Lord.

And I remember my spirit being stirred within me as this ceremony was the launching of us into our God given calling and future ministry. Hallelujah, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

Now as we move closer to Jesus Christ's glorious and triumphant return, but this time He is not coming to be scorned, beaten and killed, rather instead to rule and reign, glorious and majestic with His saints gathered together.

But before that great and glorious day, there is still work to be done.

The end-time church

Therefore, as we consider what Peter wrote and the words of Jesus, we can confidently say that the church in the last days should look like this:

- An intentional praying community
- Fervently loving one another
- Joyously welcoming all people

- Faithfully and graciously serving each other
- A community that reflects the glory of God
- Servant messengers of Jesus Christ, not giving in, not giving up, boldly pursuing the purposes of God in Jesus name!
- Never ceasing to boldly and joyously preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in the power of the Holy spirit, with signs following, healing, miracles and casting out demons, in Jesus name.

These are the last days of the last days, so let us finish well, over comers, in Jesus name!

Romans 13:11 (TPT)

To live like this is all the more urgent, for time is running out and you know it is a strategic hour in human history. It is time for us to wake up! For our full salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

In the words of the old song, "Soon and very soon we are going to see the King"