

May 15, 2016

The End Times

"I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed..."
I Corinthians 15:50-58

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of our Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first, after that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

"First of all you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this coming he promised?"...But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?"
II Peter 3:3-11

Last week we began to consider what Scripture says about the last days or end times. We noted that Jesus tells us that he is going to return and when he does it will be to bring all of us to judgment for what we have done. His second coming will be accompanied by his Father's glory and with the trumpet call of God.



Both Peter and Paul expand on these basic themes in their letters to the believers in Corinth, Thessalonica and among Jewish believers. Paul tells the Corinthian believers that at the second coming we will be changed from this perishable form into an imperishable form fit for eternity. The dead will precede us in this process, but if we are still alive we will be included as well.

The Apostle also tells the believers in Thessalonica that Jesus will come down from heaven with a loud shout and a trumpet call. The dead will rise to meet Jesus in the air and then those of us who are still alive will join them, again in the air.

Peter adds to this picture of Jesus' return the destruction of the heavens and the earth. In his words ***"...everything will be***

destroyed..." From these three passages we can sharpen our picture of the end times. Jesus will come back to bring judgment when God sends him and God alone knows when this will happen. His coming will be accompanied by a loud trumpet call as he appears in the clouds. The dead, who were Jesus' followers in life, will rise to meet him in the air, or possibly will already be with him in the air, and those of us who are still alive will rise to meet him as well.

Following these events the world that we know will be completely destroyed. It is important I think to note that these passages do not indicate in any way that there will be anyone left behind or that some life will still exist on this world. There is, in these passages, a clear picture of a one-time event when Jesus will come again and judgment will happen for everyone.

The key lesson, I believe, in all of these passages about the end times is that we need to be prepared to meet Jesus when he comes. Whether we believe that this is the last generation before that happens or that many more years will pass before he comes again, the important thing for us, individually, is to be ready to meet him "*...in the air...*"