

Foundation Study 10: End Times

What do the following verses say about the end times?

The end-time events are preceded by the church age (Matthew 16:18). The church age is the current epoch. The church age is in its last hour (1 John 2:18).

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18

The first end-time event is the Rapture of the church. The term *rapture* means to seize or snatch. The Rapture is the sudden carrying away of the church to Heaven (John 14:3). The first phase of Jesus's return is "in the air" when He raptures the church (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The second phase is "to the earth" to judge the world at the end of the Tribulation (Revelation 19:11–21). The Rapture will occur:

Soon (Revelation 1:1, 3:11, 22:6–7) (nothing is left in God's plan for the rapture to occur; it is the next event),

Instantaneously (1 Corinthians 15:51–52),

Surprisingly (Revelation 3:3), and

Before the Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9; Revelation 3:10). Believers in the church age will not endure the coming judgment of God upon the earth. Notice the term *church* is not present in the description of the tribulation in Revelation chapters four through nineteen.

2. 2 Corinthians 5:10

The following event is Judgment for believers in Heaven. This will take place while the Tribulation is occurring on earth. Each believer is accountable to God (Hebrews 4:13) and will experience God's judgment (Romans 14:10). **This is not a judgment of sin since that was dealt with at the cross. Rather, it is an evaluation of each believer's life.** Was it lived for the glory of God or not? Some will receive rewards (crowns) (1 Peter 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10, 3:11). Some will not (1 Corinthians 3:13–15; Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 4:5). After the judgment, believers will experience worship in Heaven (Revelation 7:9–12).

3. **Revelation 6:15–17**

The next event is the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27). The Tribulation is an unequalled and progressive outpouring of the wrath of God. It is experienced by unbelievers on earth left behind after the Rapture. It lasts seven years, is concurrent with the activities in Heaven for the redeemed described above, and is described in detail in Revelation chapters 4-19.

During the Tribulation, the judgment of God is worse in nature, greater in scope and higher in magnitude than anything that has ever previously occurred (Matthew 24:21). Ryrie states, “For years some men have been talking as if they thought the end were near, but at the beginning of the Tribulation, they will realize that the end is actually at hand.”¹ The judgments are poured out in three phases (seals, trumpets, and bowls). Each phase of judgment escalates and is worse than the one before. The Tribulation is characterized by intense persecution and martyrdom of the redeemed, a witness to Israel, the heightened activity of angels, and the prominence of the Antichrist.

Even in the display of His wrath, God’s purpose is to redeem people. The gospel will be shared with the entire world through 144,000 witnesses (Revelation 7:4), the two witnesses of Revelation 11 and a global angelic announcement (Revelation 14:6–7). Heaven may very well be populated by more people converted during the tribulation than all the other ages combined (Revelation 7:9–14, 14:15–16).

4. **Revelation 16:16**

The following event is the battle of Armageddon. This battle occurs on a large plain some sixty miles north of Israel at the end of the Tribulation. It is between the rebellious survivors of the Tribulation and Jesus and His angelic army. John MacArthur states, “God’s patience is exhausted with sinful, rebellious mankind.”²

¹ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 540.

² John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), location 66181, Kindle.

The outcome is swift, devastating, and complete (Revelation 19:11–21). This event marks the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium.

5. **Revelation 20:2–6**

The next end-time event is the Millennium. The Millennium is a literal thousand-year period. It follows the battle of Armageddon and is marked by the physical presence of Jesus Christ as the ruling King. It entails the absence of the Antichrist, and peace and prosperity among people. The inhabitants are the few redeemed who survived the Tribulation and the glorified redeemed who return to earth with Christ.

The remaining Old Testament Messianic prophecies are fulfilled during this time. Sacrifices memorializing the death of Christ will be offered in the Temple (Ezekiel 40-48). It will also include the complete fulfillment of key Old Testament covenants. The promise of the Abrahamic Covenant giving Abraham’s descendants the land from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates (which has never been fulfilled) will be fulfilled in the coming millennial kingdom (Genesis 15:18-21). The promises of the Davidic Covenant also necessitate the establishment of the millennial kingdom for their complete fulfillment (2 Samuel 7:12–16).

6. **Revelation 20:11–15**

The next event is the Great White Throne Judgment. The Great White Throne is the final sentencing of eternal judgment for all unredeemed souls, who by their works proved their unbelief (Daniel 7:9–10; Matthew 16:27, 25:31–46; John 5:28–29; Daniel 12:2). MacArthur states that each unsaved dead person’s “thoughts (Luke 8:17; Romans 2:16), deeds (Matthew 16:27), and words (Matthew 12:37) will be compared to God’s perfect, holy standard (1 Peter 1:15–16).”³

7. **Revelation 21:1**

The final event is Eternity (Revelation 21, 22:1–9). Eternity, also called the new heaven and earth, is a completely new creation of God. The entire universe has been destroyed and remade and will last forever! The new heaven and earth is the

³ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, location 66304.

permanent dwelling place for the redeemed from all ages. Sin is not present. There is no longer any separation between God and man. God is present with man. God's people will finally experience ultimate and everlasting fellowship with God. God's glory is such that there is no need for any sun. He illuminates everything. There is no trace of any of the fallen-ness of the first creation. There is no suffering or death. It is as God originally intended creation to be; perfect and everlasting.

The new Jerusalem is the capital of Heaven and the place where God dwells. It is a place of unmatched brilliance and the center of worship. Its size is described in three dimensions; it's a cube! Even if only a quarter of it were inhabited, it would easily accommodate twenty billion people. It is the dwelling place of the redeemed. The River and Tree of Life serve as reminders that Heaven is for the redeemed alone.

All that is described about eternity is meant to encourage the redeemed. It is meant to uplift all who are downtrodden, owing to the fallen state of this world. It is meant to inspire those who endure persecution and martyrdom. It is meant to provide hope to all who follow Jesus Christ. It is a place of unequalled joy, unrivaled satisfaction, unending delight, and ever-increasing gladness.

But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and He will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see Him for myself. Yes, I will see Him with my own eyes. **I am overwhelmed at the thought!**
Job 19:25-27

Because I am righteous, I will see you. When I awake, I will see you face to face and be **satisfied**. Psalm 17:15

Which verse was most meaningful to you? Explain.