

Beginning With The End In Mind

“What In The Earth Is Going On?”

All books that are written to help an individual become more productive, more motivated and more effective always states to begin with the end in mind. In the first part of Chapter 24 Jesus tells the disciples that not one stone of the temple would be left upon another. The disciples ask Jesus three questions. His answers were prophetic:

“As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

Matthew 24:3

Introduction: Jesus does not merely give us this to **inform** us about His return, but rather to **transform** us, to **get us into motion**, into **activity**, so that when He returns He will find us **doing what it is He has called us to do**. Jesus is speaking to his **12 disciples** just outside the city of Jerusalem just before his death on the cross.

Israel Vs. Hezbollah



JERUSALEM - Thu Jul 27, 3:12 PM ET - By RAVI NESSMAN, Associated Press Writer

Israel's government decided Thursday not to expand its battle with Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon for now, but **authorized the army to call up 30,000 reserve soldiers in case the fighting intensified**. The Lebanese health minister said up to 600 civilians have been killed in

the campaign, including as many as 200 still buried in the rubble of destroyed buildings.



A man watches an Israeli mobile artillery unit as it fires into Lebanon, July 27, 2006. (Carlos Barria/Reuters)

Jesus' disciples ask him three questions:

1. **When will this happen?**
 2. **What will be the sign of your coming?**
 3. **What will be the sign of the end of the age?**
- **There are a few key words or phrases that have connection to our topic today: **Mark of the Beast, 666, The Anti-Christ, End Times, Prophecy.****

End Times Events

First, let's look at a number of events related to the end times. They are understood differently depending on the view a person holds.

- **Second Coming of Christ**—the literal return of Christ to earth
- **Rapture**—the resurrection of believers at some point before Christ's second coming.
- **Tribulation**—a seven year period of severe judgment and persecution
- **Armageddon**—a name that has come to mean the last great battle at the end of time, though in some views it is a great battle that will consume all of Israel at the end of the

Tribulation

- **Millennium**—the earthly kingdom of Christ. It can mean a literal 1,000 years or simply suggest a very long time. It can also mean a literal or spiritual reign of Christ during this time.
- **Final Rebellion**—the last global unleashing of Satan and unbelievers against God, in which Satan will be finally defeated. Some people equate this with "Armageddon," while others see Armageddon as an earlier battle at the end of the Tribulation and before the Millennium.
- **Resurrection**—the final end of earthly existence with the raising up of people to face judgment, either all at once (General Resurrection) or in several stages for believers and unbelievers.
- **Judgment**—the final accountability of people before God as they pass from earthly existence (or death) to eternity.
- **Eternity**—a future timeless existence spent in God's presence (**Heaven**) or separated from him (**Hell**).

The Bible's Prophecy

The Bible contains a great deal of prophecy that relates to the people of Israel, the coming of a Messiah, or other events. Our culture is fascinated with the end times.

I recall around **1986?** I attended a national Christian book sellers convention. One of the key note speakers was a well known author and minister. He announced, to our shock, that he would withdraw from his normal ministry and writing to engage in a new venture. He felt strongly that he was to write fiction novels concerning the end times.

I remember shock that filled the room and the widespread disapproval. It displayed almost a sense of abandoning the faith. In his best efforts he tried to present a positive and equally important task at hand as any visionary ministry would try to do. I'm not sure how many people bought into the idea that day, but today the popularity of the "Left Behind" series of books by Tim Lahey and Jerry Jenkins demonstrates our culture's fascination with this subject and how timely his obedience to write them were. While the world approaches this subject with fear and speculation, as Christians we have a different perspective.

Left Behind Series: The first ten books, (12 in all), in the series, **with sales of more than 55 million copies, comprise the fastest-selling adult fiction series ever. The previous four titles debuted at number one on the *New York Times* best-seller list as well as those of *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*.**

- ***Desecration*, book nine, was the best-selling novel in the world in 2001.**

The Wall Street Journal- Tuesday, July 27, 2006- by Andrew Higgins

Front page: Heading- *Holy War*, title under heading- A Texas Preacher Leads Campaign To Let Israel Fight. Clips from article:

"Last week, as Israel's armed forces pounded Lebanon and worries of a wider conflagration mounted, Mr. Hagee presided over what he called a "miracle of God": A gathering of 3,500 evangelical Christians packed into a Washington hotel to cheer Israel and its current military campaign."

John Hagee's book, "*Jerusalem Countdown*", has recently sold nearly 700,000 copies since it was released in January 2006, according to his Florida-based

religious publisher, Strang Communications. Here's something he wrote:

“This is a religious war that Islam cannot- and must not- win,” Pastor Hagee's book focuses on what he says is a coming nuclear showdown with Iran. ***“The end of the world as we know it is rapidly approaching...Rejoice and be exceeding glad- the best is yet to be.”***

Three Prominent Views of the End Times

1) Premillennial

The premillennial view suggests that the Second Coming will occur before Christ reigns during a literal 1,000-year Millennium. It is the view portrayed in *Left Behind*. It was the predominant view of the early church and became prominent once again in the last century. It is the most literal interpretation of passages from Daniel and Revelation.

An additional element important to this view is the role and timing of the Rapture—the separate resurrection of believers. *Left Behind* portrays a **pre-tribulation** rapture view, where the rapture occurs before the Tribulation begins. Others see it occurring in the **middle** or **end** of the Tribulation. Most evangelical Christians today hold a premillennial view.

2) Amillennial

As time passed and Christ did not return, scholars and church leaders began looking at other interpretations. Amillennialism is the most prominent of these. It is a view widely credited to **St. Augustine**, who lived from A.D. 354-430.

While people holding this view **believe that Christ will literally return, they see as symbolic all of the details that the premillennial view interprets literally (rapture, tribulation, Armageddon, etc.)**, rolling them all into a millennial age. **During this period, Christ does not reign with a physical presence on earth, but builds the church through his influence in the lives of Christians.** It is a time of continued struggle between good and evil until Christ's return ushers in the final judgment before eternity. **The Roman Catholic Church and major "mainline" Protestant denominations hold this view today.**

3) Postmillennial

As the Industrial Revolution transformed the world and advanced human progress immensely in the 18th and 19th Centuries, Postmillennialism emerged. **This view is similar to Amillennialism, except that it sees steady human progress over evil, progressively leading to a Christianized world, which sets the stage for Christ's return.** Social and economic reforms as well as evangelism are important parts of ushering in this "golden age" of spiritual development.

Even with a horrendous Civil War in America and other conflicts scattered across the globe in the 19th century, the sense of human progress was so strong that even World War I—in which over a million people lost their lives—came to be known as the "the war to end all wars." The world moved ahead into a decade of pleasure and renewed technological progress in the 1920's.

Then the Great Depression and economic problems around the world led to radical

political change. The world was on the march toward another global conflict. While considerable technological progress took place in the 20th century, the blow of two world wars was enough to remove postmillennialism from its place of prominence.

Now when we think about the list of things I mentioned at the beginning, true believers have the opportunity to look forward to the return of Jesus Christ and I believe that some of the confusing details will not be ours to experience.

- **Jesus Christ, the Son of God could come today and not violate one scripture in the Old or New Testament.**
 - The **first time** that he came he was a **baby in a manger, surrounded by shepherds and wise men.**
 - The **second time** that he comes back he will be **surrounded by a host of angels welcoming the dead and alive in Christ to meet Him in the air.** He will come back as **King of Kings and Lord of Lords.** Can you imagine the shouting that will go on?
 - The **first time** he came He was the **Lamb of God** who was forced to carry a **cross never saying a word.**
 - The **next time** He comes back **he will be the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and He will rule this earth without competition.**
 - The **first time** Jesus came to this earth, He was **dragged before Pilot and dragged before Herod, with spit in his beard, a crown of thorns on His head and a robe that mocked his authority as King and treated as a criminal.**
 - But when **Jesus comes back, Herod and Pilot will be dragged before Him, Hitler will be dragged before Him.** They will all be dragged **before the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.**

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:19-11

- **The first time** He came to this earth he was **nailed to a cross** for your's and my **sins.**
- **The next time** He comes He will **set His foot on the Mt. Of Olives** and it will **split** in half and then He will **walk across the Kidron Valley** where He will walk **through the Messiah's gate** and will **sit on His throne in the temple and to His Kingdom there shall be no end.**

"As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Matthew 24:3

The Middle East In Bible Prophecy

What is all the controversy about in the middle east? It's **not money** and it's **not political**, it's **Theology**. Living in this world as we know it is knows that it will come to an end. Jesus will return with His holy angels and He will take His children home.

Matthew 24-25 are tied together by a central theme...**the second coming of Christ**. These two chapters catalogs **Christ's response** to the **three questions** asked by the disciples in **Matthew 24:3**. First part of chapter 24 Jesus tells of the **signs that will precede His return**.

Jesus tells us what the culture will look like before He returns:

- **false Messiahs (Matthew 24:4-5)**
- **wars & rumors of wars (Matthew 24:6)**
 - **NAIROBI, Friday, July 28, 2006 (Reuters) – In of Somali refugees have crossed the border since January some 18,000 fleeing into Kenya which bumps the refugees up to 160,000 and 16,000 fled into Ethiopia because of drought and and heavy fighting in Mogadishu, the United Nations said on Friday.**
 - Decades of ethnic tensions in **Darfur** erupted into **all-out violence in 2003** when **ethnic minorities took up arms** against the **Arab-dominated government** in Khartoum to **fight for autonomy** and a greater **share of the region's resources**.

The **government responded** by unleashing its mainly **Arab militia in a scorched-earth policy against minority villages suspected of supporting the rebels**. About **300,000 people -- overwhelmingly civilians -- have since died and 2.4 million more have been displaced**. (Source: Agence France-Presse (AFP) Date: 29 Jul 2006)

- **According the United Nations official website, the number of wars being waged around the world is growing.**

“United Nations peacekeeping is facing an extraordinary challenge. The number of operations is reaching a record level, troop deployment is on an upward spiral and the need for more civilian specialists is becoming acute. Early in 2004, the United Nations Security Council was facing the prospect of creating or expanding peacekeeping operations on an unprecedented scale. At that time, the UN’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations was managing 15 field operations, including 14 peacekeeping and one political mission. Adding to this list were potential operations in Burundi, Sudan and Haiti.”

The **United Nations defines "major wars" as military conflicts inflicting 1,000 battlefield deaths per year**. In **1965**, there were **10 major wars** under way. The millennium ended with much of the world consumed in armed conflict or cultivating an uncertain peace. **At the end of 2003**, there were **15 Major Wars** under way, with at least **20 "lesser" conflicts ongoing**.

The world is becoming more and more hostile. He is not getting better and better. He is merely learning how to become more efficient at killing one another.

- Today there are wars and rumors of war.
- **famines & earthquakes (Matthew 24:7)**
 - Most of us live in a bubble, unaware of the world around us.
 - KOHAT, Pakistan, July 29, 2006 (Reuters) - A flash flood killed at least eight people gathered for a festival in northwest Pakistan on Saturday, bringing the national death toll due to heavy summer rains to over 50 during July, officials said.
 - PAKISTAN, July 29, 2006 (Source: International Organization for Migration) - Landslides and Floods Lead to More Deaths and Displacement - The heavy monsoon rains have left thousands of people at risk in quake-affected areas from landslides and flooding with the terrain remaining highly unstable following last year's disaster that left more than 75,000 people dead.
 - China, July 14, 2006, the year's fourth strongest tropical storm "Bilis" lashed China triggering flooding and landslides. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs at least 612 people have been killed, 208 missing and about 29,622,000 people have been affected in various degrees.
 - These just happened this month.
- **persecution of His people (Matthew 24:9)**
- **turning away from the faith, hate each other (Matthew 24:10)**
- **many false prophets (Matthew 24:11)**
- **wickedness/lawlessness/iniquities (Matthew 24:12)**
 - The Greek word here *anomia* {an-om-ee'-ah} is only found **16 times** in the New Testament. **12 of those 16 times it is translated "iniquity or iniquities."** It is the strongest word in the New Testament to describe sin. There are **two other major words** the New Testament uses to **describe sin, both of them can contain the element of ignorance**, that is, they can refer to people sinning against God while unaware of who He is and what it is He commands. **But the word here carries with it the exact opposite meaning. It means that man knows the moral law of God is but not only purposely chooses to disobey it, but chooses to do away with God's law altogether, thus it translates lawless, or without God's law.**
 - Jesus is saying that before he returns people will be given over to sin, as they were in the days of Noah, as they were when they provoked God to destroy the earth with the great flood. They will do what is evil and call it good, they will seek to eradicate all elements of God's law from their lives (the secularization of society) and they will live according to how they feel, following the desires of their reprobate minds.
- **love of many will grow cold (Matthew 24:12)**
 - **"...but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."**
 - **Matthew 24:13**

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

Matthew 24:14

Never before in the history of the world have we had the capacity to preach the gospel to all nations like we do today. With modern technology, with travel being made easier, with language becoming less and less of a barrier thanks to computers, the gospel can now be preached around the world.

People are getting saved in places you can hardly believe. Muslims are having dreams about Jesus and are seeking out Christians and coming to Christ, churches in third world countries are sprouting up in record numbers. Great population centers like China and India, the two most populated countries on the earth, are experiencing great movements of God's Spirit.

July 25-26, 2006 I was privileged to spend two days with **Pastor Ted Haggard** along with about 40 other pastors. One of his staff member who was sitting at our table told us he just came back from Tibet. They spent several days on a prayer walk, praying over temples and the streets of that community. They met a young man had traveled for three months arriving at this particular sacred temple in Tibet. The young American asked the young man what he was doing there, his response, "I'm looking for truth." In polite gesture he asked what they were doing there. And they said they were sharing truth. The young man gave his heart to God.

The last part of chapter 24 through chapter 25 give us instruction as to how we are to live until He returns. Some difficulties surrounding these two chapters and verses often arise when one of two problems occur. One deals with interpretation and secondly deals with translation.

1. INTERPRETATION:

Jesus did not share with his disciples and inadvertently, us to confuse us or to puzzle us. Many people approach the scripture as if it were a mystery to like the "The Divinci Code" popularizes. Jesus gives us these passages to tell us how things will be before He returns and how we should live till He does return.

- **He is telling us that certain world events will occur and what they will look like.**
- **He tells us how we should be living.**
- **He tells us that we should expect and look forward to His return.**

We should **not waste our time trying to figure out WHEN He will return, this passage is telling us WHAT we should be doing Till His return.**

2. TRANSLATION:

Words mean different things depending upon the context of the sentence or paragraph or even the book, in which they are written. **Example** the word **lie**, can mean a **falsehood** or it can mean to rest in a **horizontal position** upon a bed or couch. Everything depends upon the **context**. This is of particular importance in this passage, specifically in verse 34 and the word "**generation**."

**"I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened."
Matthew 24:34**

There are many views on this scripture. If you translate the scripture in view of the Old Testament, "generation" often refers to a lifespan or a period of about 40 years. The New Testament

- **Generation- genea {ghen-eh-ah'} 1074-**
 - 1) fathered, birth, nativity
 - 2) that which has been begotten, men of the same stock, a family
 - a) the several ranks of natural descent, the successive members of a genealogy
 - b) metaph. a group of men very like each other in endowments, pursuits, character
 - 1) esp. in a bad sense, a perverse nation
 - 3) the whole multitude of men living at the same time
 - 4) an age (i.e. the time ordinarily occupied by each successive generation), a space of 30 - 33 years
- **The word can be translated "race" or "kind." Thus Jesus is saying here that the Jewish race would not be completely wiped out but would still be on the earth when He returned.** Many nations or people groups that existed two thousand years ago are no longer in existence today. Jesus was giving a prophetic word, guaranteeing that the Jews, as a people, will be here until He returns.

Conclusion:

1. **Are You Prepared?**

Are we prepared for the second coming of Christ? Have you told everyone you need to tell about the gospel? Is your own family in order? What about your own life? Is it in order? I mean, the real question is, If Jesus came back today, would you be ready?

2. **Are You A Steward?**

How are you using that which belongs to God but He has entrusted to you, to be faithful and prepared for His return?

God has saved us from our sins, transferred us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son, not merely to save us from eternity in hell, but specifically to empower us with His Spirit so that we might accomplish His will here on earth. That is the reason He gives us what He gives us.

Your house, your job, your children, your spouse, your time, your treasures, your talents, in fact, everything you have belong to God, and someday each of us will be judged according to our faithfulness to use God's things to accomplish God's will.

3. Are You Expectant?

Expectancy is different than being prepared. Preparedness is being ready for His return, but Expectancy is looking forward to His return, expecting it with great anticipation and eagerness.

Expectancy speaks to the degree to which we are in love with Jesus. You remember when you fell in love, you could not wait to talk to your sweetheart, you could not wait to see them, to hold their hand and spend time with them. You were in love and your level of expectancy, or anticipation, spoke volumes of your love. What about your love for Christ? Is it passionate and expectant? Is it that you can hardly wait to see Jesus, is it that you are anticipating His return with great joy, or is it that that you've become so comfortable here on earth that you have a "heaven can wait" kind of attitude.

If we love Him, we will love His return.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ..."

Titus 2:11-13

