

The End Times: Expect the Unexpected

(Blog 0016 AndrewHadden.org)

Introduction

This blog is a sermon I preached in April of 2016. It includes a list of things coming on the country that God gave me in the middle of the night before I spoke. Many of the things listed began being fulfilled shortly after the sermon, including hurricanes. At the time I spoke, no hurricane had made landfall in Florida as a hurricane in over ten years. Then huge, destructive hurricanes came and kept coming. I also warned of plague, violence, brutality, and riots coming, and they have certainly come. More serious things on the list are yet to come. However, in the long run, this sermon is more important than the list of things coming, because it challenges a lot of assumptions and speculations about the End Times that are wrong and keeping people from preparing for what they will walk through. The sermon was prepared with more earnest prayer over more time than the list of things coming. The sermon here is from the notes, really a manuscript, from which I spoke, slightly edited.

Sermon introduction

When the idea of speaking . . . was presented to me, I prayed about it and God gave me the title: “The End Times: Expect the Unexpected.”

You must understand that title carried a lot of meaning for me that I probably ought to explain. For years God has helped me see that there may be a number of unexpected things happen as we approach and enter the End Times—and that would be exactly how it happened when Christ came the last time.

For those not in the adult Sunday school class the weeks I taught, I should also explain that my background is different from most ministers. God did not call me until after I already had been a science major for two years and then graduated with minors in math and science and a degree in management. God then did call me, but made it plain my calling was different than most. He used a Bible college dean to tell me I should go ahead and get a master’s degree in Bible as well as a masters in Administration. I eventually did so. I graduated with a masters from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Bible, and a masters from MSU in Business Administration.

I really enjoyed the deep learning in seminary and wanted a doctorate but God said “No,” that he wanted me to rely on him. In Seminary, I took a course in the End Times from one of our denomination’s most respected scholars.

I did a project for the course in which I summarized much of what I had been taught as a short course on the End Times. I focused almost entirely on giving people the scriptures used to support every End-Times teaching or event presented. I felt people needed to know the scriptures for themselves, not just what some “expert” assured them would happen. I have looked at a lot of prophecy teaching and books by self-proclaimed experts in the many years since, and I am still convinced that people need to study and know the scriptures for themselves.

I am also convinced that people need to watch and pray as Christ and the Apostles taught them to, not blindly accept what prophecy teachers tell them to expect to happen.

Why?

1. I have seen “Expert” prophecy teachers be wrong over and over again, as they speculate with a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other.

My eschatology professor, Dr. Stanley Horton, was a very distinguished and respected scholar, probably the most respected ever in the Assemblies of God. Yet he was a meek and humble man. He also treated with respect those that disagreed with his assessments of what the End-Times scriptures meant and how he expected they would be fulfilled. I respected that in him and learned from it.

He also pointed out having seen, in his time, a book deeply discounted at a bookstore after the death of an Italian World-War-Two dictator. The title was, *Is Mussolini the Antichrist?* You see, Bible prophecy teachers have been selling books based on speculation a very long time.

More recently, God sent me to a thrift store where he had sent us before because they often had good Christian books for sale cheap, which fits our budget. There I found a book by what was claimed to be a “Best-selling author,” an expert on Bible prophecy. It was written in 1988. God insisted I buy it. It cost me fifty cents.

It sat by my bed for weeks with me only exploring it a little until I was to prepare for this sermon. Then God insisted I was to read from it. He directed me towards the back of the book and I began to skim a certain chapter, but he insisted I read it in detail.

Somewhere in the book the man had claimed having over fifteen hundred books on Bible prophecy in his library, but I found myself labeling sections in the margins with, “Speculation,” and then “Lame speculation.” Finally, I reached a statement and read it to my wife and voiced the possibility of including it in this sermon and God surprised me and told me to do it. The statement indicated he expected the Millennium to begin in the fall of 2000. In fact, he had the second coming figured to the day based on feast times, and marginal translation of a reference to the birth of Christ, and taking “a day is as a thousand years” extremely literally, and various speculations. In his defense, he did include an “if” at the beginning of his paragraph, but it was clear he believed his speculations and expected others to.

And this man had every appearance of being a scholar, and had his book recommend by a former leader of a major Christian publisher. I will spare him reference to his name and the book title unless you come ask me.

See what I mean about speculation? And with God directing me to this book and this passage, it seems he is also drawing attention to rampant speculation by Bible prophecy teachers.

That leads me to my second point:

2. I have seen that whatever our nation’s perceived threats are get cast as fitting scriptures on some Biblical end-times adversary.

In the cold war, Russia was certain to be the seat of evil. When Saddam Hussein was the head of the nation in the “Axis of Evil” in the world, prophecy teachers were just sure ancient Babylon was going to rise again through him.

In fact, one scriptural prophecy says Babylon will “never be inhabited” again (Isaiah 13:19-20), and another says it will be a “perpetual desolation” (Jeremiah 25:12).

3. Since the time of Christ, the “experts” with the most self-confidence (or should I say pride?) are the ones most certain to be wrong.

To truly be accepted as a biblical scholar one should know all the languages used to write the Bible. That would include ancient Hebrew, koine Greek—the Greek of the common people in New Testament times, and Aramaic, another common language used by those that wrote the Bible, or other sources useful to studying the language, times, and customs of the Bible. Then one might want to also learn Latin and German, because so much early church or reformation literature are written in them. It is humbling to consider one can do well and get a master’s degree and yet only be beginning.

But knowledge does not make one right. If it did, all scholars would agree—and they do not.

Language scholars and interpreters are good for telling us what the possible valid translations and interpretations of scripture are, **if** they are honest with us and with themselves.

However, it is plain that those with the most knowledge of the original languages of the Bible, and the culture in which the Bible was written, can get it wrong.

We have examples over history of this, as Biblical prophecies came to pass—or the interpretations of those prophecies, as written about by various experts and scholars, did not come to pass as they expected.

Let’s start with the Pharisees of the time of Christ.

The Pharisees knew the language of the Bible better than any biblical scholar since A.D. 70 could ever hope to. They lived in the country in which the Bible was written. They walked the same places as those that wrote the Bible. They had available to them many, many books and writings of earlier times in Bible lands that are forever lost to scholars today.

The Bible writers, Old Testament and New Testament, made reference to books and records of the times of the Bible that are since forever lost. Rome decimated the Jewish homeland in A.D. 70 when the Jews revolted and lost. Jews were deported all over the Roman Empire and their homeland destroyed. Many judgments Christ prophesied, including the destruction of the temple, were fulfilled at that time.

But the Pharisees had all that knowledge and many of those sources the most expert scholars today will never have—and they still got it all wrong. They knew the culture and languages like no scholar since can match, and still got it wrong. The Messiah came the first time very differently than they expected.

They knew it all, and had it all, and still blew it completely. Jesus the Messiah came the first time very differently from what they expected. Christ rebuked the Pharisees as “Blind guides” and for not discerning the signs of the times. He said to them in Mathew 16:3: “. . . Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. (Mat 16:3 NKJV)”

He rebuked them for teaching their own teachings as if they were the commands of God. In Matthew 15 he applied the prophecy of Isaiah about that to them:

"Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" (Mat 15:7-9 NKJV)

How did this happen?

1. They were proud—basically they were sure they were right.

Unfortunately, a lot of prophecy teachers today seem to suffer from the same condition. They speak with great “authority” on matters they end up being wrong about, and they do it again and again.

2. They chose what scriptures they wanted to pay attention to and ignored many others.

Basically, they wanted a Messiah who was a military leader who would set them free from foreign domination, so they paid attention to scriptures about that. They were not interested in the Messiah who was a suffering servant who would be wounded and die to heal and restore his people, so they apparently ignored those scriptures.

Unfortunately, many Bible prophecy teachers today do similar things. They pay great attention to scriptures that fit their system of interpretation and end-time theories, and ignore others that do not. This was dangerous at the time of the first coming of Christ and it is dangerous now, as the Second Coming of Christ draws near.

Today prophecy teachers come up with rules and teachings that are not in scripture and place their rules above scripture, and it causes them to ignore the plainest and most natural meanings of many of the teachings of Christ to his disciples in scripture.

And they live in very dangerous times—where they can be very wrong and be held accountable by God for it, just like the Pharisees.

3. The Pharisees thought they knew it all—that nothing would happen that they did not know about in advance.

For instance, they were sure no prophet could come out of Galilee, where Jesus had been ministering, because one had not in the past or they did not see it predicted in scripture (John 1:52). When Christ came the first time, God did the unexpected and all the self-assured experts got it wrong!

The Messiah came in humility and poverty instead of being born in a palace and riding around on a white horse or in a chariot. The Messiah came in a way that the Pharisees dismissed as being born out of fornication. They accused Christ with, “We were not born of fornication . . .” (John 8:41). They apparently missed the prophecy of a messiah born of a virgin.

They were sure the Messiah would be like them, even think like them!

Who got it right when Christ came the first time?

People who watched and prayed—attuned to the Lord’s voice. Let’s look at who recognized the Christ when he first came to his temple. As required by the law, Mary brought Christ to the temple shortly after he was born. Let’s look at Luke 2:25 and following:

(25) And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

(26) And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

(27) So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law,

(28) he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

(29) "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word;

(30) For my eyes have seen Your salvation

(31) Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

(32) A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."
(NKJV)

Then Simeon prophesied and then Anna came in, in verse 36:

(36) Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

(37) and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

(38) And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (NKJV)

So, who recognized Christ first when he came the first time? Those attuned to the voice of the Holy Spirit and who watched and prayed.

Let's talk about End-Times Theological "Systems."

There are systems of thought and doctrine that some apply to End-Times scriptures. Their systems dictate rules for how each scripture must be interpreted. Yet some of these rules violate rules the Church at large had come to know were valid and important. And these systems and rules were relatively new developments in the long scale of Church history.

Beware of any system of end-times interpretation that forces you to abandon the plain sense of the passages a normal person would get when first reading it. The Bible was written for the common man. It was never intended that you would have to have a doctorate and be indoctrinated in some special way of interpreting End Times scriptures.

Any system of doctrines should be built by considering ALL the relevant passages and consider all their likely possible interpretations.

Any system that leaves out key scriptures or contorts the meaning of some scriptures to make them fit the system, is suspect.

Also, be aware God does not tell us everything.

There will be surprises! In the New Testament, in Revelation 10:3-4, we are warned that John was told not to write what the seven thunders said. In the Book of Daniel, chapter 12, we are told some things are sealed until the time of the end. Some things we just do not know, or won't know until God decides it is time for us to know it.

Let's look at some "System spoilers"—Scriptures and concepts to take note of, that don't get convincingly reconciled to various end time systems:

First let's consider Figurative Passages.

A lot of Bible prophecy teachers want to force us to assume every scripture should be taken as literal unless there is very compelling evidence in the passage that it is symbolic. That is probably a response to a lot of the extremely allegorical or symbolic interpretation forced on

passages where it did not belong, by those in the distant past in Church history. But swinging the pendulum far the other way is not always better.

People who have studied the scriptures, and know the culture in which it was written, and other literature of the time periods that prophetic books like Daniel and Revelation were written, will tell you that some things should be taken as symbolic.

Daniel is one of the best books to study to start with, because there are symbolic revelations that get explained afterwards by God or an angel so we can get the feel of symbolic revelations and how to properly handle them.

And, when Christ came the first time, the Apostles interpreted the prophecies of his coming differently than our system of rules for interpretation would allow. It's embarrassing for them, but scholars readily admit this. A delicate balance is needed in interpreting things symbolically or literally, a Spirit-led balance. Not either extreme.

For instance, God drew my attention to a book pastor loaned me. Then God made me take note that the author pointed out that the number seven is used to represent "completeness" or "perfection." God made me take note of that and it matched something God said to me a few years ago, as I earnestly studied the End-Times passages and prayed about them for months. That changed my perspective on three literal sets of seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls of plagues and other events all compressed into a seven-year period of history. It caused me to search the scriptures more and pray more. If those sevens represent completion rather than literal sevens, things might be very different than we suppose.

It could be that we are much further into End Times events than we might assume. War, violence, conquest, plagues, and other judgments have been going on a long time already. My parent's and grandparent's generations saw much of it. Honestly, I do not know what sevens may be literal or symbolic, but I am now open to the possibility that things may not happen as I had expected—which is a healthy place to be.

Let's talk about "Babylon:"

References to Babylon in the New Testament can be confusing. I already pointed out the scriptures saying Babylon would be a perpetual desolation and never be inhabited again after it was destroyed long ago. Obviously, we have to come to some understanding of references in the book of Revelation that takes these scriptures into account.

Consider that the book of Daniel was very familiar to the Jews and the early Christians. In the book of Daniel, a figurative revelation of a series of world-dominating powers is explained to include Babylon as the first one in the series. It is natural that people would reference the first in the series of powers to label any following world-dominating power. This would be especially true if the current world-dominating power was already putting numerous Christians to death as a threat to their empire.

It would NOT be smart to write a book to be circulated among the churches (such as the book of Revelation) that said Rome or its successor empires would fall. We can also see this in that many scholars take Peter's reference, in 1st Peter 5, to the believers in "Babylon," as a reference to believers in Rome. Also consider that studies of the writings of the ancient Jewish rabbis confirm that referring to Rome as Babylon was common.

Let me add that my respected seminary professor, who taught on the End Times, felt that "Babylon," in the book of Revelation, represents the current world system. That could mean the political and economic system in our world today, of which our nation is a part. Now, why is this important? Because Revelation 14:8 announces: "Babylon is fallen . . ." and Revelation 18:2 repeats "Babylon the great is fallen . . ." (KJV) and two verses down it says: "And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues'" (NKJV).

If the world system is to be judged around us, we should be careful to listen for God's voice and be where God tells us to be.

Now let's look at some scriptures that are system spoilers:

That would be scriptures that some theological systems of End-Times doctrines do not reconcile well.

Let's look at the ending of the parable of the tares:

Look at Matthew 13, beginning with verse 40:

(40) "Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

(41) "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,

(42) "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

(43) "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! (NKJV)

Let's look at the parable of the dragnet:

The following warning is given again a few verses down from the parable of the tares, in the parable of the dragnet. Beginning with Matthew 13:47 it says:

(47) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind,

(48) "which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.

(49) **"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate [KJV says sever] the wicked from among the just,**

(50) "and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (NKJV)

References to “one will be taken and the other left:”

Now look again at references to “one will be taken and the other left,” which so many want to see as related to the rapture. In Matthew the context is judgment, because Christ talks of it being like when the flood of Noah came and took them all away. Beginning at Matthew 24:38 it says:

(38) "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

(39) "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

(40) "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.

(41) "Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

(42) "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. (NKJV)

In Luke we see similar verses, and the context is the flood of Noah and then when fire rained down on Sodom. Reading beginning with Luke 17:28 it says:

(28) "Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;

(29) "but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

(30) "Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (NKJV)

Christ warns them not to go back for their goods when warned to get out—not something that would be a factor if the rapture was what was being talked about:

(31) **"In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away.** And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.

(32) "Remember Lot's wife.

(33) "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

(34) **"I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left.**

(35) **"Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left.**

(36) **"Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."** (NKJV)

Don't get me wrong. My doctrine aligns with the Assemblies of God. I believe in the rapture and hope for it. I hope it comes before any bad stuff happens. However, we must not blind ourselves to other things the scripture clearly warns us will come. God has judged nations and cities all through history, as his Word says he will. We dare not believe otherwise.

If an angel wakes you in the night and says to get out of a city, you better do what this passage says and not go back for your stuff.

But there is a solution—and Christ taught it to us.

Christ's solution to all the things coming was to "Take heed, watch and pray." Christ gives his warning of all kinds of bad stuff coming in the End Times but then jumps to referring to how a fig tree puts out its leaves in a certain season, so when you see its leaves you know summer is coming. Then he makes the point that no man knows the day or the hour of his coming, but that you can see the season if you watch for it.

Let's look at Mark 13:28 and following:

(28) **"Now learn this parable from the fig tree:** When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.

(29) **"So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near; at the doors!"**

(30) "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

(31) "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

(32) "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (NKJV)

Then Christ gives his solution to it all:

(Mark 13:33 NKJV) "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is."

So "Take heed." The Greek word behind that means (per Strong's Dictionary), behold, beware, . . . look (on, to), perceive, regard, see, sight, take heed.

I would say one should "Take heed" to the warnings of Christ and the Apostles in scripture. Know the scripture.

"Watch" - This has the meaning of: To be sleepless, i.e. keep awake: --watch. It relates often to a military guard keeping watch at night.

In Christ's parables of the End Times it is contrasted to those who sleep or are unaware when they should be watchful.

"Pray"— we should all be aware of what that means. Prayer is meant to be two-way communication. We must not ignore that Christ says that his sheep hear his voice and another they will not follow.

If we are not in that place, we should get there, to properly face the End Times and the times ahead when God judges nations and cities as he always has all through history.

In Luke we see a similar warning at the end of Christ's End-Times discourse:

"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36 NKJV).

Conclusion:

So, when it comes to the End Times, "Expect the unexpected." And do what Christ said to do:

1. "**Take heed**" to know and consider his warnings in scripture.
2. "**Watch**"—Be alert and watchful, not slumbering or not paying attention
and,
3. "**Pray**"—Be sure you can hear God's voice.

I had this sermon ready and God had me up in the night last night and gave me this list of things coming on the nation to share at the end of this sermon:

List of things coming:

Los Angeles earthquake and tidal wave (given to me as God directed me to read from Isaiah 23 on 9/30/2005 and God called out “Los Angeles” multiple times as I read of the destruction in this passage). I checked with a famous prophetic minister around eighteen months later and he replied: “Everyone I know who really is a prophet has heard that one.”

Tidal waves in general (tsunamis)—I heard, “God’s people need to beware the sea.”

“Muslims attacking—within and without”

Violence: Riots, muggings, brutality

Plague: natural and artificial (weaponized germs, etc.)

Storms: Hurricanes, tornadoes, ice, hail

Floods, drownings

Being protected:

Being protected from these things requires hearing the voice of God—about:

- Where to live or where to NOT live.
- Where to be on a given day.
- Where to NOT be on a given day.
- How to prepare for what is coming.

That requires a lifestyle of prayer and obedience to God.

How to turn back God’s decrees of judgment:

Repentance - for our own sins, including complacency.

Revival—Doing everything we can to bring our nation to revival and repentance.

Intercession—

Asking God to forgive the sins of our nation.

Asking God for mercy on our nation.