



## Are We Living in the "End Times"?

**Daniel 12:1:** (ASV) *...and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time:...*

**Special Guest: David Stein**

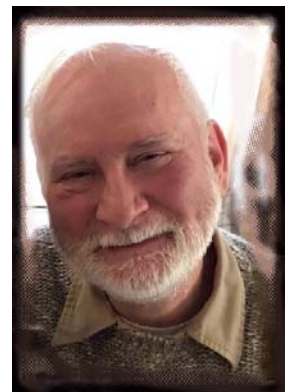


People believe in the Bible to varying degrees. Some of us see it as the unerring word of God, while others see it as an account of history, wisdom and standards. Still others see it as sprinkled with both wisdom and folly. Then we have those who see no value in it at all. For the most part, one of the common threads that all who know something about the Bible seem to share is the belief that it speaks of God's wrath and apocalyptic events. While these are true perceptions of the Bible, they are by no means a complete picture. How can we know what the "End Times" are and when they start? What kinds of things happen during these times? Is there any tangible proof of the End Times that can establish the credibility of Bible prophecy to the skeptic? Where do we start?

David, our friend and brother-in-Christ, has been on Christian Questions several times before. Most recently he guided us on our series called, "Has the Bible Been Mistranslated and Misunderstood?" Search these episode numbers to hear more:



Ep. 1151: (Part I)  
Ep. 1152: (Part II)  
Ep. 1153: (Part III)  
Ep. 1162: (Part IV)  
Ep. 1163: (Part V)



**What Scriptures refer to *the time of the end*?**

The phrase *time of the end* occurs in the Bible six times, and only in the book of Daniel. Let's examine the timing particulars of how it is used in five of the six uses.

***The time of the end is a specifically-appointed time:***


**Daniel 8:17:** (ASV) *...Understand, O son of man; for the vision belongeth to the time of the end.*

**Daniel 8:19:** (ASV) *And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the latter time of the indignation; for it belongeth to the appointed time of the end.*

**Daniel 11:35:** (ASV) *...even to the time of the end; because it is yet for the time appointed.*

These ideas of time are very important to us because our God is a God of time. Prophecy always involves time. Here in Daniel, the phrase *time of the end* shows God is operating within a chronology. It indicates there is an end to the age of sin and death, and something more wonderful is coming.



The *time of the end* is the demarcation point from what is wrong with the world  to what is right with the world. Daniel tells us it is a specifically-appointed time.

**It is NOT to be understood until it is upon the world:**

Daniel 12:4: (ASV) *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end:...*

Daniel 12:9: (ASV) *...Go thy way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end.*

Our God is a God of progressive revelation, meaning things become clearer as time goes on. The prophecies in Daniel specifically have to do with the *time of the end*, but Daniel was told they will not be understood.

*Shut up the words, and seal the book* - the details will not be understood until those who live in the *time of the end* read it. They will need the prophecy to identify when they are living and what they are supposed to do.



The time of the end

Jesus used a similar phrase in the New Testament - *end of the age* (or *end of the world* in the King James Version and other older translations). He does not use exactly the same language or the same words, but it has much the same meaning. The word for *age* in this case is the Greek word *aion*.

**Age:** Strongs #165, *aiōn*; properly, an age; by extension, perpetuity (also past); by implication, the world; specifically (Jewish) a Messianic period (present or future): age, course, eternal, (for) ever(-more), (n-)ever, (beginning of the, while the) world (began, without end)

This word refers to a period of time. Remember, the prophecies in Daniel are also all about time. Jesus gives us several more hints in the following texts.

**Christianity will be corrupted, and that corruption will be revealed at the end of the age:**

Matthew 13:39-40,49: (NIV) <sup>39</sup>*and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the **age <165>**, and the harvesters are angels.* <sup>40</sup>*As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the **age <165>**.* <sup>49</sup>*This is how it will be at the end of the **age <165>**. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous.*

Jesus is saying the same thing as Daniel - there will be an *end of the age*. He gives us a particular feature of this time by talking about the harvest and the angels doing the harvesting. Jesus understood Christianity would be corrupted. When we look back, we can clearly see this. This corruption would be revealed at *the end of the age*.

Jesus definitely taught about *the end of the age* - his apostles had learned enough to specifically ask for signs:

Matthew 24:3: (NIV) *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** <165>?*

Even the disciples were interested in this subject. Worshippers of God throughout the ages have been looking forward to an end to sin and death and accompanying suffering. When will the end of this terrible age of suffering be?



Jesus reminded his disciples that his care would be present for them and every Christian until *the end of the age*:

Matthew 28:20: (NIV) *and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the **age** <165>.*

This beautiful verse shows the tenderness of Jesus. He understood there would continue to be trouble throughout all of history. We will distinguish that trouble from the specific trouble at the end of the age below. He knew that those who followed him would be persecuted, even martyred. He comforted all those who would follow him through the next 2,000 years.

There are more Scriptures like this. A search on the phrase *last days* gives us more, helping us to establish that the Bible teaches there is a *time of the end*.

This leads to two more questions:



What features indicate this *time of the end* so we can answer these questions?

To answer this, we will focus on the prophecy in Daniel:

Daniel 12:1-4: (KJV) *<sup>1</sup>And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. <sup>2</sup>And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup>And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. <sup>4</sup>But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*

There is a lot of information here. Let's dissect these words and extract some of the characteristics of the *end of the age*:

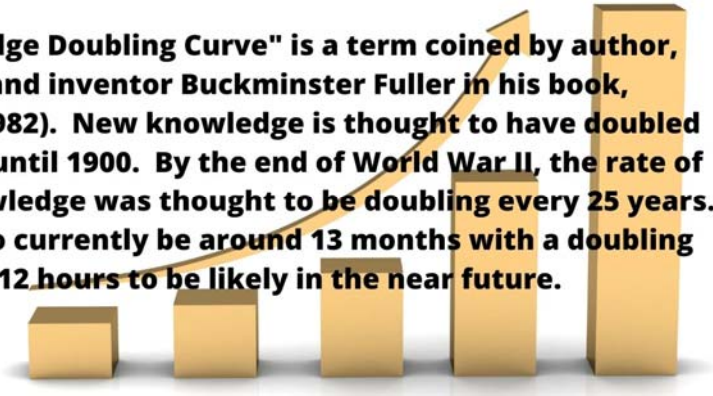
- *There shall be a time of trouble* - what does this mean?
- *Such as never was since there was a nation* - it will be the worst in history. The threat level will be the highest it has ever been.
- *At that time thy people shall be delivered* - it will precede the blessings of God's kingdom - the end of the evil system will bring



about the rejoicing of all of mankind.

- The prophecy will not be understood until the *time of the end*.
- *Many shall run to and fro* - a clue! There are unprecedented opportunities to travel today.
- *Knowledge shall be increased* - exponentially!

**The "Knowledge Doubling Curve" is a term coined by author, architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller in his book, *Critical Path* (1982). New knowledge is thought to have doubled every century until 1900. By the end of World War II, the rate of worldwide knowledge was thought to be doubling every 25 years. It is thought to currently be around 13 months with a doubling every 12 hours to be likely in the near future.**



People often focus on the time of trouble. This is not a happy scenario. We have an ominous ending of who knows what?

**So far, we have a very broad description of this time of trouble.  
Are we able to know specific details?**

Bible prophecy can be tricky because it is so interpretive. We can look at specific verses from a specific perspective and come to specific conclusions, which will inevitably be...incorrect!



The key to all of this is context. So far, our foundation states:

1. The End Times are unique in ALL of history, and
2. This time would not be understood until it arrived.  
It would be a mystery until it was actually upon the world.

**DEFINE TROUBLE** There has always been trouble. Why is this so different?

Trouble in the End Times can be distinguished from trouble down through the ages by three things:



**SCOPE**



**THREAT LEVEL**



**CONTINUITY**

This chapter in Amos talks about the features of the end days, like the *continuity* or piling up of one trouble on top of another:

Amos 5:19: (KJV) *<sup>19</sup>As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.*





## SCOPE of trouble

**INTERNATIONAL** trouble (war)  
**NATIONAL** trouble (revolution)  
**LOCAL** trouble (anarchy)  
**POLITICAL** trouble  
**SOCIAL** trouble  
**RELIGIOUS** trouble  
**ECONOMIC** trouble

These categories show the *scope* of trouble - it is worldwide and affects all aspects of everyone's lives.



## THREAT LEVEL of trouble

**Even non-religious people who know nothing of the Bible  
fear for the survival of mankind.**

**DEFINE TROUBLE** Has our age been  
a unique time of trouble?

Let's look closer at a few of the categories  
of world trouble.



## INTERNATIONAL trouble (war)

Trouble will occur in a unique period of time:

Matthew 24:20-22: (NASB) <sup>20</sup>But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. <sup>21</sup>For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. <sup>22</sup>Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

1914 began World War I, which was clearly a significant time of trouble in human history. Never before had a world war occurred.

(Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_wars\\_and\\_anthropogenic\\_disasters\\_by\\_death\\_toll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_anthropogenic_disasters_by_death_toll))



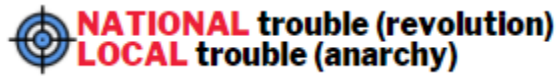
17 to 40 million: The total number of  
estimated deaths from World War I.

80 to 120 million: The total number of  
estimated deaths from World War II.



These numbers are unprecedented in human history!

Being "unprecedented" is a feature of the End Times. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the most deaths due to war in the history of humankind.



(Sources:

[https://www.answers.com/Q/How\\_many\\_countries\\_were\\_there\\_in\\_the\\_world\\_in\\_1914](https://www.answers.com/Q/How_many_countries_were_there_in_the_world_in_1914)

<https://www.worldometers.info/geography/how-many-countries-are-there-in-the-world>)

62: The number of sovereign nations in 1914.

195: The number of sovereign nations in 2021.

The point of these statistics is that new countries come about by separating from old nations. This is usually not done amicably, but through *revolution* or *rebellion* and *anarchy* against the ruling nation - which is more war and more tribulation.

The number of nations has more than tripled in the last 100 years.

This scope of trouble has not happened in the history of humanity to the same degree as today. This is not a matter of faith or interpreting Bible prophecy. This only requires a comparison of modern vs. ancient history. We live in times that are different from any other. We are also looking at it in blocks of time rather than comparing recent years. Biblical perspective takes place in much larger blocks of time.



**The rich will be exposed for their lack of love and concern:**

James 5:1-3: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. <sup>2</sup>Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

*Corporate influence in the world:* With power comes responsibility. The rich through the ages have had a certain amount of power due to their wealth. This brings responsibility because wealth has political influence. God remembers when this influence is used unkindly or selfishly. God's justice is based on careful recordkeeping.

James 5:1-3 speaks of a time of reckoning for the rich - *your gold and your silver have rusted and their rust will... consume your flesh like fire*. When the stock market crashed in 1929 in the United States, many committed suicide because they could not deal with the loss. The despair of losing all was literally killing them.

(Source: <https://www.globalissues.org/print/article/234>)

As of 2002(!), of the 100 largest economies in the world, **51 were corporations while only 49 were countries**, based on a comparison of corporate sales and country gross domestic product (GDP). (Editor's note: According to non-governmental organization, Global Justice Now, as of 2018, 69 of the top 100 global economic entities are corporations; the other 31 are countries.)



In this era of globalization, marginalized people are becoming especially angry at the motives and operational methods of multinational corporations.

Corporate-led globalization is being met with increasing protest and resistance. There is a rebellion against the power held by corporations.

This power is not just economic, but also political. They are influencing political movements and government officials, all without being subject to, or restrained by, election - not much different from dictatorship. Corporations are even considered to have human rights!



Has this ever happened in the history of humanity? The point of this is to define a quality or feature that distinguishes the *time of the end* from all others. Has there ever been an Amazon, Walmart or Microsoft or any other massive corporation? No! Back in the 1800s, we had the coal barons and the oil barons, the great banking empires, but that also was unprecedented and could be considered the beginning of these End Times. Corporations have evolved in our own time in ways we could not have imagined.



### Monetary problems:

Ezekiel 7:19: (NASB) *They will fling their silver into the streets and their gold will become an abhorrent thing; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD. They cannot satisfy their appetite nor can they fill their stomachs, for their iniquity has become an occasion of stumbling.*



### Examples of trouble with silver and gold:

- *The Great Depression* (1929-1941) - Starting in the United States as a leader in international trade, this affected the worldwide community.

We continue to see in this the fact that since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of the world is affected by such large events. This was the beginning of globalization, when economic trouble is no longer localized to one nation.

- *Inflation* - We have seen waves of this even in our lifetime. A dollar today will not buy the same amount as a dollar a year ago. Inflation steals money from the people and shrinks the value of saved money in the bank. This is trouble for the people of the world.
- *The Gold Standard versus fiat money* (the value is not based on a gold or silver bar in the bank, but is a floating standard based on how much is printed by the government) - This depends on government decree and how our country measures up to others. The value of our currency is determined by how much we can buy from others.

Money can lose its value in two ways: It can be stolen through inflation, but it is also worthless when there is nothing to buy. We might have \$100 in our hand, but if there is no bread, the \$100 is not going to fill our stomachs; it becomes worthless.





Has this ever happened in the history of humanity? We are seeing these things all come together; is this coincidence? No, it is a converging of all these elements as we move forward in God's plan. This near-global depression, waves of inflation, loss of a physical monetary standard, along with the continued waves of recession and boom are, once again, unprecedented in the amount of people affected.



### The widespread embracing of immoral behavior:

2 Timothy 3:1-3: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>*But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. <sup>2</sup>For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,*

Is this not a description of the social attitudes of our times? It seems there is little affection for the downtrodden, or respect for authority.

- *Divorce rates* - are rising. Marriage is decreasing.
- *Murder rates and other crimes* - are out of control.
- *General hateful behavior* - of people toward each other.

Has this ever happened in the history of humanity?



2 Timothy 3:4-7: (NASB) <sup>4</sup>*treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup>holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these. <sup>6</sup>For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, <sup>7</sup>always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

This is the state of religion today. It is interesting that the Apostle Paul brings in the religious/truth aspect at the tail end of all these awful features, the corruption of mankind's character. It is all connected with the loss of a relationship with God.

- *Church attendance* - is greatly reduced.
- *Ignorance of the Bible* - especially here in the United States. Even 50 years ago, people in this country had some knowledge of the Bible. This is not so today.
- *Hypocrisy of the churches* - the light that is shining on all subjects is revealing many kinds of wrongdoing.
- *Religion as a business* - running the church to make money for the few rather than helping the poor; the rise of political power and influence.

Has this ever happened in the history of humanity?





From the 3<sup>rd</sup> century when Christianity became an empire's religion by decree to about the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Napoleon crowned himself in 1804, thereby stating he was not subject to the Catholic church), big churches dominated and decreed religion. They became a big business rather than a calling. Now we have all these smaller churches who are still run as a business! Rather than the few who ran the enormous churches, it has now spread so that anyone wanting to elevate themselves to preacher can set up on a street corner and make money. This is a unique time!

The *time of the end* is serious and needs *us* to seriously be aware and alert to what is happening. The End Times bring the time of trouble that is broad-based, worldwide and absolutely unique!

So far, we have focused on prophecy and trouble.  
What are some other signs to identify our day as the End Times?

As we have, in light of prophecy, described the various kinds of trouble that plague our time, we certainly seem to be in the *time of the end*. However, this conclusion can still be subjective. What about a specific "sign of the times" that rises above that subsection? What about a sign that does not need faith for understanding; it simply needs an open mind to be able to view the facts? What about Israel as a nation?



Let's look at the regathering of the nation of Israel. The upcoming Scriptures will document the casting off of Israel and disbursement of the people. In the first century, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, sacked the Temple and took the people from the land of their heritage, scattering them throughout the Roman Empire. Nowhere in history has an ethnic people who were conquered and removed from their land, ever come back into being. They are usually absorbed by the conquering people; their culture goes away and they become part of the people they are living among. Not so with the Jews, even though they escaped to many other countries and cultures. But they maintained their Jewish identity and were ready when the Lord began the regathering.



- This is a miracle and a matter of history.
- No ethnic group that was dispersed throughout the world has ever returned to their ancient homeland except the Jews!
- As we look at this, let's compare the historical facts to the biblical projection of the future of the Jewish nation.

**Jesus himself declared that Israel would become a desolate place:**

Matthew 23:37-39: (NASB) <sup>37</sup>*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. <sup>38</sup>Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! <sup>39</sup>For I say to you, from now on you will not see me until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*

Jesus was talking to the Scribes and Pharisees here, the religious leaders. But then he switches to *Jerusalem, Jerusalem... your house is being left to you desolate!* He is referring to Israel as a nation.



They are being nationally rejected by God. They had been unfaithful to their covenant, rejected their Messiah and so they were being cast away.

The Bible is FULL of prophecies that show the conclusion of this desolate state. Even in the above verses, Jesus gives a hint of this when he says they will not see him *until...* this suggests there will be a future for them once they recognize him as their Messiah.

**God shows us that once the consequences of His anger are fulfilled, He will restore them to peace:**

Jeremiah 32:37: (NKJV) *Behold I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in my anger, in my fury, and in great wrath: I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely.*



This is in much plainer language. Jeremiah wrote this centuries before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. God knew there would come a time when His judgment would send them out to other countries. Here He says He will *gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in my anger... and bring them back to dwell safely!* Not only did God know of the judgment and the result, but that the desolation of Israel would end.

**God is described as reaching for and beckoning Israel to come home:**

Ezekiel 20:34: (NASB) *I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;*

*An outstretched arm* - beckoning them back. This is such a loving picture! These prophecies are not just in one place in the Old Testament. The previous one was in Jeremiah and this one is in Ezekiel. This similar theme is repeated multiple times. He certainly wants the Jews to know He is going to do this and it will be impressive - *with a mighty hand!* For centuries, the Jews were hated and persecuted by the people they lived among, but now He brings them back to their land.

Since May 14, 1948, when Israel became a nation, we have seen His mighty hand at work. There are still many people against them. Arab nations in particular bring their armies against them. However, Israel continues to survive despite a war in the 1950s, the 1967 War and the 1973 War (a surprise attack during a holy celebration). Throughout all, God's hand was there. His plan unfolds step-by-step and He works with large blocks of time.

**God is specific as to the breadth of Israel's recovery to their own land:**

Isaiah 11:11-12: (NIV) <sup>11</sup>*In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea.* <sup>12</sup>*He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.*

This is dramatic! A key phrase in here is *a second time*. Some may interpret this regathering as being after they were conquered and sent to Babylon, long before the first century *diaspora* (disbursement). But, the *second time* certainly places this at the time of the Roman disbursement.



*He will raise a banner for the nations - Israel is a banner for the nations - she is a shining example of God fulfilling His promises in the End Times. He has drawn the Jewish people from the four quarters of the earth. Many people may not like such a banner, but it exists.*



**God is fatherly and direct in His regathering of His people from every direction of the map:**

Isaiah 43:5-6,21: (NIV) <sup>5</sup>*Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. <sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, Give them up! and to the south, Do not hold them back. Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth - <sup>21</sup>the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.*

We can make historical connections to this prophecy.

*To the north* - after World War II, there were many Jews in Russia, which was part of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin). They were just coming off of the terrible persecution of the Holocaust in Germany. It has been said that Stalin was about to sign an order for more persecution of the Jews when he had a stroke. It was time for immigration from the north to start. They left Russia in waves. They would come to Israel in groups, and then it would stop. Then some other incident would happen and it would start again and then stop.

*To the south* - from the south came the Ethiopian Jews, airlifted into Israel. **For more information, see Wikipedia.com under "Operation Solomon."**

**This reminds us of:**

Isaiah 40:31: (KJV) *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

**God's plan for Israel's restoration will be unmistakably recognized by those He redeemed:**

Psalms 107:2-3: (NIV) <sup>2</sup>*Let the redeemed of the LORD say this, those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, <sup>3</sup>those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.*

Interestingly, these verses characterize Israel as *redeemed*. They will recognize the hand of God along with their Messiah. They do not currently acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah but will in these last days. This ties in with the removal of blindness from Israel, so that they will be able to see the hand of God.

The casting off and regathering of Israel is BIG biblical news! To understand Israel is to understand the End Times.

**The restoration of Israel is a biblical fact.  
How can we better understand the implications of this process?**

Just like most things in Bible prophecy, Israel's restoration was foretold and documented in Scripture. We here at *the end of the age* have a bird's eye view of the historical facts that verify these prophecies. We are also positioned to see current events unfold in light of these fulfilled prophecies! We are sitting in the best seat possible despite the time of trouble and all that is going on. When we can see prophecy unfolding before our eyes, it is an inspiration to lift us above all that is going on around us.

Further verifying these prophecies and recognizing symbols helps us pay close attention to current world events. Jesus used the symbol of a fig tree to depict Israel.



In so doing, he repeated the lessons of many prophecies:

Luke 13:6-9: (NASB) <sup>6</sup>And he began telling this parable: A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any. <sup>7</sup>And he said to the vineyard-keeper, Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground? <sup>8</sup>And he answered and said to him, Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; <sup>9</sup>and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.

When Jesus used the term *fig tree*, he was talking about the nation of Israel. Jesus connects the return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel with the *time of the end*. So many of the promises God has made with Israel are inseparably connected to the land. The terrible punishment of desolation meant taking them out of the land. Restoring them to the land is part of God's process of redemption for Israel.

When we consider Israel, we need to think of the people, the moral and religious system set up by the Law, *and the land*.

Luke and Matthew each deliver important details of this prophecy of Jesus. We will see how Israel is directly tied to both his return and the End Times:



Luke 21:29-31: (KJV) <sup>29</sup>And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; <sup>30</sup>when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. <sup>31</sup>So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

This is the same parable but with slightly different details:



Matthew 24:32-34: (KJV) <sup>32</sup>Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: <sup>33</sup>So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. <sup>34</sup>Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

While speaking a prophecy of his return, Jesus drops in the Parable of the Fig Tree. This prophecy is also found in Mark 13 with similar language.

Earlier we looked at this text where the disciples asked three questions:



Matthew 24:3: (NIV) As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. Tell us, they said, (1) when will this happen, and (2) what will be the sign of your coming and (3) of the end of the *age* <165>?

This Parable of the Fig Tree is part of the answer to what would happen at the *end of the age*.

(Matthew account) *When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ...summer is nigh* - symbolically this would refer to Israel's reestablishment in their homeland just prior to them reestablishing their relationship with God, once their blindness is removed and they recognize Jesus as their Messiah. That is the *summer*, the *time of the end*, when all of these things wrap up.



(Luke account) *Behold the fig tree and all the trees* - if the fig tree represents Israel, then *all the trees* must represent other nations. Remember the amazing increase of sovereign nations from 62 in 1914 to 195 today? That is a lot of "trees" putting forth leaves! There is growth happening, and where there is growth, there is fruitage. God works in processes over time, not in moments.



How can we be certain that the fig tree and figs represent Israel? It is good to have a "Thus sayeth the Lord..." - and we do!

### First the fig tree:

Hosea 9:10: (ASV) *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at its first season.*

### Now figs as seen in a vision of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 24:1-2, 4-8, 10: (NIV 2011) <sup>1</sup>*After Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and the officials, the skilled workers and the artisans of Judah were carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the LORD showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the LORD. <sup>2</sup>One basket had very good figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very bad figs, so bad they could not be eaten.*



### We have seen from Hosea that the fig tree represents Israel; now comes the meaning of the *good figs*:

<sup>4</sup>*Then the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>5</sup>This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Like these good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians.*

<sup>6</sup>*My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. <sup>7</sup>I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.*

*Like these good figs* - how clearly it says the good people of Israel are the good figs! The context is Nebuchadnezzar coming against Jerusalem, destroying the city and taking away the people to Babylon after Zedekiah rebelled against him. God says He will *watch over them* (the good figs - the exiles in Babylon) *for their good, and...will bring them back to this land.*



### Now the meaning of the *bad figs*:

<sup>8</sup>*But like the bad figs, which are so bad they cannot be eaten, says the LORD, so will I deal with Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors from Jerusalem, whether they remain in this land or*

*live in Egypt... <sup>10</sup>I will send the sword, famine and plague against them until they are destroyed from the land I gave to them and their ancestors.*

When Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem, he deported Jehoiachin (Verse 1) to Babylon and made Jehoiachin's son, Zedekiah, a vassal king (one who owes allegiance to another king or emperor) in Jerusalem. Zedekiah had to answer to Nebuchadnezzar and pay tribute but was allowed to rule Jerusalem. Zedekiah decided to ally himself with Egypt and rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. In this, he disobeyed God's word given to him through the prophet Jeremiah.



God told him to continue to submit to Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah was not a good king. Not only did he not obey God, but he had Jeremiah imprisoned and did other awful things. The *bad figs* represented Zedekiah and the others who had remained in Jerusalem following Zedekiah.

Why all this work to establish Israel in relation to the *time of the end*? Because all of God's plan is tied to the destiny of His chosen people! God is a God of His word. He made a covenant (a promise) to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to bless their seed. God remembers that promise! It means He will restore the nation of Israel in the land.

We know historically that Israel became a nation, fulfilling biblical prophecy. We know we are in the End Times because these signs are obvious!

**Israel's existence as a nation is a matter of history. This history fulfilled prophecy:**

Hosea 2:14,15: (ASV) <sup>14</sup>*Therefore, behold, I will allure her (Israel), and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.* <sup>15</sup>*And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall make answer there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

Let's go back to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Jews are still spread throughout the world. The Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire (which included Palestine) decreed that Jews could not own any land in that area. Some Jews lived in Jerusalem, but could not own the land they lived on.

This changed in 1878 due to the influence of the British government on the Turkish government. It opened up to allow Jews to come into the land. At the same time, Zionists (Jews that were waking up to their heritage) were preaching to the Jews to go back. They taught that this was the destiny of the Jews.

*I will allure her* - this was the voice of the Zionists, the enticing thought of returning to the land once called Israel. However, the German Jews were comfortable in Germany, the Russian Jews in Russia and so on. Each Jewish group of families, while separate from the other cultures around them, were nonetheless comfortable in the niche they had carved out for themselves in their respective countries.

*Bring her into the wilderness* - what was Israel like in 1878? There were not any beautiful groves or farm land, vineyards and orchards. It was a wilderness and swampy in parts. There was land that was useless, not worth anything, impossible to live on. This was the land the Jews began to buy. The Turks were happy to sell them the malaria-ridden swampland!

The first settlement, Petah Tikvah, was built in 1878. *I will give her the valley Achor* (trouble) *for a door of hope*. The Hebrew, *Petah Tikvah*, means "door of hope." The long development - from 1878 to when Israel became a nation in 1948 - was arduous but profitable.

*She shall make answer there, as in the days of her youth* - currently Israel exports food and leads the world in technology. *Petah Tikvah* was literally the door through which the Jews began resettling Israel with Jews.



## Looking at the beginning of the promise of Israel:

Genesis 22:17-18: (NIV 2011) <sup>17</sup>*I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies,* <sup>18</sup>*and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.*

*Stars in the sky* - spiritual Israel

*Sand on the seashore* - natural, earthly Israel

*Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed* - is Israel already a blessing nation today in this *time of the end*?

Many Jews recognize this as one of the privileges they have. God loves the whole world of mankind (John 3:16), but He has a responsibility to the Jews because of the covenant relationship with Abraham (Romans 4:16). To say that all the families of the earth are to be blessed by the seed of Abraham means that Israel must have a very important role in God's blessing for the rest of the world. The big fulfillment will not be until the kingdom is totally set up, but we see the roots of this promise already at work.

Some Jews use the expression, *Tikkun Olam* (pronounced teekoon o-lahm), which means "to repair or perfect the world." They recognize that as God's people, they have a responsibility to shepherd and help the rest of the world. **See Bonus Material for more about *Tikkun Olam*.**

This has brought about the following:

- Technology benefitting all nations, such as desalination, electronics and much more
- Drip irrigation technology - bringing arid areas to lush production (exported to many dry areas around the world like Africa and South America)
- Cell phones - from patents in Israel
- Medical diagnostics
- Humanitarian work - Israel is often one of the first on scene of disasters (including the collapse of the Surfside Condominiums in Florida recently)

While we can certainly see the blessings already here, there is much more to come. The *time of the end* certainly brings about a time of trouble; the evil ruler of this world will not go down without a fight! However, we can look around us and see God's blessings as we see through the trouble.

There is a lot to think about here and the time of the end can be scary. We wanted show that the fulfillment of prophecy is happening right in front of us. We can take hope in it and lean on it as we endure the troublous times we live in, and rejoice in the fabulous promises God has in store for us!



*So, are we living in the “End Times”?  
For Jonathan and Rick (and David!) and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*

***There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it. — Edith Wharton***



Join us next week for our podcast on July 19, 2021  
Ep. 1187: How Can We Overcome Crushing Guilt?

More on *Tikkun Olam* and Study Questions follow



## Tikkun Olam

*"In that day shall Israel be ... a blessing in the midst of the land" (Isaiah 19:24).*

In 2013, a video was released entitled "Israel Inside." The video describes various groups of Israelis who have a special passion of doing good for others. These groups include engineers, doctors, nurses, farmers, entrepreneurs, inventors, and many others. One of their central concepts is a philosophy called *Tikkun Olam* (pronounced teekoon o-lahm). This Hebrew phrase means "to repair or perfect the world."

One of the stories discussed in the video was the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010. What country responded the fastest with the most people? Israel. The volunteers went because they believed in their God-given responsibility to help others.

The video also described the humanitarian efforts on the part of medical personnel who provide free medical treatment to Palestinian children with life-threatening health issues.

Another story spoke of an Israeli agricultural engineer who happened to notice a singular location where the vegetation was lush, while areas around it were dry and lifeless. Upon investigation, he discovered that a water pipe passing under the green area had a slow leak, only drops of water coming from it. The volume of water was so small that it was not noticed. Yet, this minor watering was producing spectacular results. From this discovery came the super-efficient Israeli drip irrigation technology used all over the world. This technology uses a tiny amount of water to provide just what is required by the plants while conserving millions of gallons throughout the earth.

A multitude of examples were presented in the video. The prevailing theme was the Israeli drive to help others in this world, or *Tikkun Olam*.

These Israelis believe that God has blessed them so they can bless others. Consecrated Christians should be thrilled with this attitude on the part of many of Abraham's natural seed. To be sure, not all Jews agree with this philosophy. Some religious Jews reject the idea entirely, but the concept beautifully fits the Divine Purpose of God.

### THE IDEA OF REPAIRING THE WORLD IS SCRIPTURAL

In Genesis 22:17,18 we read, "that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

This text has several powerful points:

- All nations will be blessed.
- The blessing will come through Abraham's seed.
- The seed has two components: a spiritual seed, "the stars," and a fleshly seed, "the sand."

We may describe the blessing of all nations as repairing the damage done by sin. This philosophy of *Tikkun Olam* reflects the spirit of the Abrahamic Promise already working in some members of Israeli society. It is a preparatory work occurring before the completion of the church. This should be the Christian's attitude as well. It is the same philosophy behind the church's share in the sin-offering. The work of removing sin is essentially repairing and perfecting the fallen race. It is fixing the world!

### FIXING THINGS — HELPING OTHERS

We find in the book of Joshua a beautiful picture of our future responsibility toward the world. When the time came for Israel to cease wandering in the wilderness, they were directed to conquer the Promised Land. There is an interesting situation concerning 2½ tribes of Israel:

"To the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying, Remember the word which Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded you, saying, Jehovah your God giveth you rest, and will give you this land. Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall abide in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan; but ye shall pass over before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and shall help them; until Jehovah have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which Jehovah your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and possess it, which Moses the servant of Jehovah gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrising. And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou hast commanded us we will do ... as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only Jehovah thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. Whosoever he be that shall rebel against thy command ... he shall be put to death: only be strong and of good courage" (Joshua 1:12-18).

It is interesting to note that 2½ tribes (Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh) received their land inheritance on the east side of Jordan, before the land west of Jordan was conquered. These 2½ tribes entered into their rest before the other tribes.

But, as Joshua pointed out, entering into their rest did not relieve them of their responsibility to help their brethren who had the work of conquering the land still before them. Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh had a sacred responsibility to help them possess their land inheritance. This forms a most beautiful picture.

These 2½ tribes represent classes who receive their reward and enter their rest **before** the mass of mankind. The picture is as follows:

- Reuben (firstborn of Jacob) = The Little Flock
- Gad (meaning "a troop") = The Great Company
- Half Tribe of Manasseh (firstborn of Joseph) = The Ancient Worthies

These three classes will receive their reward before the world. The Little Flock and Great Company enter the spiritual realms before the general resurrection, while the Ancient Worthies will be resurrected to human perfection—a "better resurrection" than the world (Hebrews 11:35).

While these three classes will have entered into their reward, their rest, they are not relieved of responsibility to help others. The others in this case make up the world of mankind. These special classes will all assist mankind in "conquering the land," an apt illustration of



Reuben, Gad, Manasseh

mankind's journey up "the Highway of Holiness," the road to human perfection (Isaiah 35:8). Put another way, they must work to "repair" the world during the kingdom. One of the primary tasks associated with that repair is **reconciliation**.

#### MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

"All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye

reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

Though the Apostle Paul is primarily speaking of the church's present role in bringing others to Christ, we are also being prepared to share in the work of reconciling the world to God. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:20).

Man has been separated from God because of sin. Reconciliation is the process that repairs that bond and restores man to the loving relationship possessed by Adam in Eden. We will have the knowledge and power necessary to perform this ministry in the kingdom. What a delightful task that will be!

But to receive that ministry in the future requires that we learn it now. If we are to "fix" the world, we have to develop an attitude of reconciliation in this life. What perspectives do we need to prepare us for that future work?

First, we need to love this world. This may sound contradictory to the words of the Apostle John, "**Love not** the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

Being admonished to not love earthly ambitions or even good things the world has to offer, we are also not to love the evil ways of the world. Our love should be for things of God and for humanity, in distinction from this wicked system (Strong's G2889, *kosmos*). Jehovah Himself sets the example of this type of love. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Godly love is most interested in the well-being of others. How then can we love the world that is inherently sinful? Here are some suggestions:



### SEE THOSE IN THE WORLD AS YOUR CHILDREN

• Since Jesus will be the "Everlasting Father," the life-giver of mankind (Isaiah 9:6), his bride will be the nurturing and caring mother. This, then, will make mankind our children. It is naturally easier to love our own children, to be more forgiving and to let their immature insults and offenses go unnoticed.

• As uninformed children, they do not know what is actually happening around them! We, on the other hand, understand the great wisdom behind God's permission of evil. We can comfort them with this understanding.

• Like children, most worldly people are of immature character. This will change one day. For now, we can look at others for the potential they possess when rightly educated in the kingdom.

• Remember that we are dying for them!

### DO GOOD

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us **do good unto all men**, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Our fellow body-members in Christ should be our first priority, but **not exclusively**

- Talk to people.
- Express appreciation to waiters and waitresses.
- Be kind to checkout people at stores.
- Notice ones who are looked down upon or seem emotionally injured.
- Be willing to listen.
- If a situation permits, offer to help. Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The Apostle James provides a very sobering text about doing good: "Therefore to him that knoweth to **do good**, and doeth it not, to him **it is sin**" (James 4:17).

Jesus gave similar instructions to us: "But **love ye your enemies**, and **do good**, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35).

### BE A PEACEMAKER

"Blessed are the **peacemakers**: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Jesus is clear that this is a necessary characteristic of those who will be "children of God." But it requires discernment and wisdom. Perhaps we might find ourselves in a tense situation or as witnesses to one. What can we do? One approach may be to try and defuse the tension with a kind word or some wise humor.

"A **soft** answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the **wise** useth **knowledge** aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. A **wholesome tongue** is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit" (Proverbs 15:1,2,4).



*If we are not peacemakers, then are we blessed?*

Peacemaking involves showing compassion and understanding. That is just what people are often looking for.

The beautiful Israeli concept of *Tikkun Olam* — to repair the world — is at the root of God's Divine Plan of the Ages. Consecrated believers are running for the prize to do this very thing. But we can practice it now, in everyday life. Let us never let an opportunity pass us by to be like our Heavenly Father and "so love the world" with acts of kindness and understanding. Repairing the world in small ways today manifests our desire and worthiness to do so in the kingdom on a much grander scale.

"Delight thyself also in Jehovah; and He will give thee the desires of thy heart. Commit thy way unto Jehovah; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:4,5).

— Bro. David Stein



**CQ Kids**  
christianquestions.com

Subscribe to our YouTube channel  
and check out CQ's  
**"Moments that Matter!"**  
These two-minute videos give you  
something to ponder throughout  
your day or before you go to sleep.  
ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube  
or search

Like us on Facebook

cqbiblepodcast  
Christian Questions  
Think about the Bible like you never have before

### Christian Questions Weekly Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and  
Study Questions

Text

**CQREWIND**

to **22828** to get started.



# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1186: Are We Living in the End Times?

<https://christianquestions.com/current-events/1186-end-times/>

See:  **CQ Rewind**  
SHOW NOTES

1. Is the “time of the end” in Daniel 8 and 11 a specific or random period of time? This time is a demarcation point between what two time periods? Did Daniel understand these prophetic visions? How do you know? Who will finally understand them? (See Daniel 8:17,19, 11:35, 12:4,9)
2. What did Jesus predict about the end of the age? What had the disciples learned enough to ask about? What was a great comfort to them and to us? (See Matthew 13:39-40,49, 24:3, 28:20)
3. What are the characteristics of the end of the age described in Daniel 12:1-4? What three things distinguish end time trouble from the trouble we have seen throughout history?
4. What types of trouble has the world experienced since 1914? What distinguishes the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from those that came before?
5. What is predicted for the rich? What social and religious trouble can we already see today? (See Matthew 24:20-22, James 5:1-3, Ezekiel 7:19, 2 Timothy 3:1-7)
6. What is the unequivocal sign at this time in the world’s history that is specific to the time of the end? What did Jesus foretell in Matthew 23:37-39? What do Jeremiah and Ezekiel tell us God will do at the end of the *diaspora* (disbursement)? From where does Isaiah say will God gather them? (See Jeremiah 32:37, Ezekiel 20:34, Isaiah 11:11-12, 43:5-6,21) Will Israel finally recognize God’s plan for its restoration? (See Psalms 107:2-3)
7. Who connected the time of the end and the restoration of Israel? How did he connect it? What is the symbolic tree that represents Israel and how do we know it represents Israel? (See Luke 13:6-9, 21:29-31, Matthew 24:32-34, Hosea 9:10, Jeremiah 24:1-2,4-8,10)
8. How did the regathering of Jews to Israel begin? What does the Abrahamic Covenant or promise tell us about Israel as a blessing nation? (See Hosea 2:14,15, Genesis 22:17-18, Romans 4:16)
9. Why is Israel being restored? How have they already helped others in the world? What does *Tikkun Olam* mean?
10. How does seeing the fulfillment of many prophecies happening today help alleviate stress over the troublesome events in the end days? How does understanding the End Times help your faith?