

The End Of The World Is Coming – Make Sure Your Are Ready

Introduction: It used to be that only religious people spoke about the end of the world, but not anymore. With the creation of nuclear weapons we as a race have the capacity to destroy the world all by ourselves. Now, with pollution and global warming, scientists are predicting all kinds of calamities if we humans don't do something to reverse the trend of poisoning and heating up the planet.

All that aside, there is still the word of Scripture that says that this world is destined to pass away. One way or another, the end of the world is coming and we had better be ready.

In the gospel passage today we come to the beginning of what is sometimes called *the little apocalypse*. As we have heard, it starts with Jesus explaining to his disciples what will happen to the temple and the city of Jerusalem; verse 2, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another, everyone will be thrown down.'

The destruction of Jerusalem took place in AD 70, when the Roman general Titus put down the Jewish rebellion and literally destroyed the whole city. You can go there today and see what is left of those 'magnificent buildings.'

When you read on in Mark 13 you see how Jesus fuses that judgment with the judgment of the last day when, to quote our creed, Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead.' For example at verse 24 he says:

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But in those days, following that distress, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

This is standard apocalyptic language to refer to something so catastrophic that no words really can describe it. It conjures up images of what a nuclear war might bring on, but it would be something affecting only this tiny planet. Jesus is talking about the end of all things, what we call the universe.

Jesus goes on:

At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

The idea of God destroying the universe and bringing everyone before him for judgment is a terrible thing to contemplate but is integral to the Christian world-view. For example when Paul was addressing the leaders of Athens in Acts 17, he said, ‘for God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man [Jesus Christ] whom he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.’

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When you think about it, it makes sense that this should happen. Mankind, every one of us, has made a mess of this planet, of our own lives and everything we call human history. Think of wars, crime, cruelty, selfishness, immorality, exploitation of the weak and the environment for our own ends, and so on. If there is not to be a day of judgment when everyone will be held to account, then there is definitely no justice in this life or in the next.

Furthermore, if there is to be no judgment then, to quote Paul, 'let us eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.'

Unlike popular culture, where everything is relative, and right and wrong are determined by personal preference or selfish ambition, God, in whose image we were created, remembers every idle word and every secret thought, not to mention the things we do. He has appointed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness.

The good news is that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. In other words he has provided a way whereby we may escape that great and terrible day.

In sending Jesus to become one of us and to expose himself to every temptation and to all the evil that men do, God has provided not only a way of escape from his righteous justice but a new life and a new home with him in paradise. Listen to these words from Revelation 21:

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Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth and the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Yes, the end of the world *is* coming. That is not to say that other things, such as war and the effects of global warming won't happen also. But they will be nothing compared with what Jesus is talking about.

The important thing is to be ready. Mark 13:32 says; ‘no one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on your guard!’ And verse 37, “what I say to you I say to everyone: Watch!’

The way we prepare for that great and terrible day is to repent of our sin and put our trust in Jesus to save us. This he will do. As Peter said on the day of Pentecost, ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’