

COULD IT BE?

by Gregg Gibbons (April 2007)

Some Christians claim that the end of this world is near because, in part, there are increases in earthquakes and hurricanes. This claim follows up verses like Matthew 24:7-8 and Luke 21:25, "There will be famines and earthquakes. All these are the beginning of sorrows. And there will be distress of nations, and perplexity, the sea and waves roaring."

However, when I recently checked these claims for myself through the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), I found the claims misleading. The average number of world-wide tropical storms each year continues to be around 90. And seismographs available since 1900 show the number of earthquakes above a 6 magnitude has not significantly changed. The apparent rise in total number of earthquakes is attributed to the fact there are 8,000 more seismograph stations in the world today with the ability to detect small earthquakes.

The false claims by some Christians are puzzling to me. It appears that they are (hopefully inadvertently) wrongly applying data to fit their self-conceived doctrines of the end times. And it seems that they have established doctrines of the end times to replace the present hope we have in Christ. And what is most puzzling is that so many Christians accept these claims as being from "authorities," while God actually is the final authority. I know about this, for I was one who blindly accepted the claims of Christian "authorities."

I long to hear personally from God. And long to be an instrument of God to help nurture others to personally hear from God. I am seeking to teach people not WHAT to believe, but WHO (Jesus) to believe. Transformation in people comes from a personal word from God, and not from some man's interpretation of God's word for them.

Following are questions I am sincerely asking regarding "end times" to fulfill the yearning in my heart to personally hear from God, and to encourage others to do the same. ;Some of these questions will sound radical to you, as they do to me. However, please know that these questions are sincere. I truly yearn to see Christ face to face. I believe the Bible is the inspired (expired) Word of God, and I literally believe every word in the Bible. And I am trusting that the Christ through the Holy Spirit enlivens these words in my heart.

Be challenged. Be encouraged. Trust in God's ability to speak to you more than your ability to hear God. For you are in Christ, and Christ is in you...all because of the cross and resurrection. Everything flows from that blessed foundation.

1. Could it be...that thinking so much on the *end times* can take our gaze off of Christ in the *now times*?
2. Could it be...that our true motive to share the gospel of Christ with the whole world is unconditional love and not on the condition that this will allow Jesus to return?
3. Could it be...that God's promise of a Land is so much greater than a tract of land that is 0.02 percent of the earth's total land surface?

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4. Could it be...that the Promised Land is the kingdom of heaven subduing the entire earth for God's glory?
5. Could it be...that Christ's return in His physical body will be the consummation of His spiritual body subduing the earth?
6. Could it be...that true love really never will fail and that Christ's love through His church will ultimately permeate the whole earth?
7. Could it be...that a focus on a doctrine of "end times" can subtly tempt us to *trust in Christ's return later* rather than to *trust in Christ Himself now*?
8. Could it be...that it is a deception to want to be rescued from tribulations when our true hearts actually yearn to know Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings?
9. Could it be...that an "end time" focus could deceive us similarly to those in biblical times who missed the truth that Jesus the Messiah had already come and dwelt among them?
10. Could it be...that Jews and Gentiles are now one in Christ under one glorious new covenant, and not separated under two covenants?
11. Could it be...that the Old Covenant is obsolete not because it is done away with but because it is gloriously fulfilled in the New Covenant more than we could have ever imagined?
12. Could it be...that all of God's promises in all of His previous covenants with us are gloriously fulfilled in His New Covenant with His Son Jesus?
13. Could it be...that we can be deceived into a false contentment by trusting *words of men* regarding "end times" instead of expecting personal revelations from *words from God*?
14. Could it be...that Christ will not have to return to rescue His body from failing to subdue the earth?
15. Could it be...that there can never be a more glorious temple than a child of God indwelt by the glorious life of Christ?
16. Could it be...that we really are the living stones of God's ultimate temple?
17. Could it be...that Christ is now as much King as He will always be?
18. Could it be...that the continuance of sin after the Flood is God's testimony that evil cannot be purged from the earth by forced judgment apart from the cross?
19. Could it be...that God's plan is to purge evil from the earth by preaching the gospel of righteousness in Christ alone through His children?

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20. Could it be...that all Christians as God's *new creations* partaking of the *New Covenant* actually comprise the *New Jerusalem*?
21. Could it be...that Israel's purpose in God's history has been gloriously fulfilled by producing the ultimate Israelite – Jesus Christ?
22. Could it be...that the greatest honor for a Jew today is to be *in Christ*, and not *in Jerusalem*?
23. Could it be...that there is nothing more powerful than the leaven of love in each Christian permeated in routine daily activities?
24. Could it be...that there is no such thing as a mundane routine for those who are indwelt with the living and majestic Christ?
25. Could it be...that we can be deceived into believing we need the excitement of "end times" while the truth is that we have all of Christ's joy in us now?
26. Could it be...that we can be deceived into believing we need the fear of the "end times" to keep us in check while the truth is that we are already and forever free in Christ?
27. Could it be...that God does not need a cataclysmic act of judgment to add to the finished work of Christ through the cross?
28. Could it be...that a focus on "end times" can deceive us to seek judgment for our enemies rather than to seek mercy and salvation for them?
29. Could it be...that a discipler of Christ is not a person who merely warns others of *future tragedies* but who is willing to relate to others in their *present tragedies*?
30. Could it be...that "go and make disciples" really is the great commission and not "watch and be ready"?
31. Could it be...that the bodily return of Christ is simply the glorious consummation of God's unfolding revelation of His dear Son, and is not an abrupt end of the ages?
32. Could it be...that all of history is the unveiling of Christ?
33. Could it be...that our true hope is Christ now, not rescue later?
34. Could it be...that prophecy is not about the amazing fulfillment of random predictions so that God can prove the Bible is His Word, but prophecy is all about the unveiling of all of God's promises fulfilled in Christ?
35. Could it be...that there will never be a "rapture" as glorious as when God drew me out of Adam and transferred me into Christ?

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36. Could it be...that salvation is a literal transformation that occurs when a person beholds Christ Himself, and is not a reaction for escaping the "end times"?
37. Could it be...that a man who falsely predicts the bodily return of Christ diverts the attention of people away from Christ?
38. Could it be...that a man should ask for forgiveness when his predictions of Christ's return prove to be false?
39. Could it be...that we should repent from listening to *man's unsure predictions* rather and turn to listening to *God's sure promises*?
40. Could it be...that intentional daily disciple-making is infinitely more effective than hasty efforts to "get people saved" before the "end times"?
41. Could it be...that God is providing ample time for high-quality disciple-making relationships?
42. Could it be...that there is a reason for the fact that there is not one clearly defined "end times" doctrine agreed upon by Christians over the past 2000 years?
43. Could it be...that a focus on Christ's Second Coming can be a subtle temptation to believe the lie that I am separate from Christ and not one with Him now and forever?
44. Could it be...that a focus on Christ's Second Coming can deceive us to believe Christ is not as close as He actually is?
45. Could it be...that the greatest "end time" there ever will be for me personally is when *my identity in Adam ended* and *my identity in Christ began*, so that Christ's bodily return in the world's "end times" will simply be an affirmation of my personal "begin time"?
46. Could it be...that although the time periods of history are indeed unique, they are not disjointed, and are a continuum of the single unfolding story of Christ?
47. Could it be...that the Holy Spirit in us is literally the Second Coming of Christ, and that we are actually yearning for the bodily Third Coming of Christ?
48. Could it be...that our greatest privilege is to not be taken away from making disciples through Christ who indwells us?
49. Could it be...that all Scriptures really do point to Christ and not to the "end times"?
50. Could it be...that we can be deceived to think we want to be snatched up "in victory" because we are not trusting in the true victory we already have through Christ's cross and resurrection?

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51. Could it be...that God can use, but does not really need, satellites to propagate His gospel, and that His plan is to use people indwelt by the life of Christ to be His gospel "brush fire" across the face of the earth?
52. Could it be...that the "end" is not about *man's time* but is about *God's purpose* which is to reveal His Son Jesus?
53. Could it be...that true teachers don't teach us *what to believe*, but *Who to believe*?
54. Could it be...that true teachers don't only teach us what they have heard from God, but they use their hearing to testify to us how we also can personally hear from God?
55. Could it be...that the book of Revelation is not only about the future, but is about the revelation of Christ in every age?
56. Could it be that there's a reason words like "rapture" and "antiChrist" are not in the book of Revelation?
57. Could it be...that *seeing Christ face to face later* will gloriously affirm *seeing Christ heart to heart now*?
58. Could it be...that we'll recognize Christ when He bodily returns because this sight will only affirm what has been real in us all along?
59. Could it be...that the greatest "coming" of Christ other people see is Christ shining in His glory through you?
60. Could it be...that God doesn't want us to label ourselves as something like "pre-millennial pre-tribulation dispensationalists" and that He only wants us to know our true identity as His "dear son" or "dear daughter"?
61. Could it be...that every moment given to us by the grace of God is actually a new beginning, and is not so much an expiration of time leading toward an end?
62. Could it be...that we will spend eternity in a precious awe of the grandeur of the gospel?
63. Could it be...that the gospel is not *about Christ*, but *is Christ*?