

Question: "What does the Bible mean when it refers to the end of the age?"

Answer: The end of the age ("end of the world" in the KJV) refers to the end of this present era and the commencement of the next dispensation. It is the period that precedes the second coming of the Son of Man as the Righteous Judge. The end of the age includes the rapture, the tribulation, the second coming, and the judgment of the nations, all of which help usher in the age to come.

Jesus refers to "the end of the age" a couple times in Matthew 13, as He explains the meaning of some parables. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus warns of a judgment to come in which "the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire" (Matthew 13:40). This will happen, Jesus says, "at the end of the age" (verses 39–40). Later, Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a dragnet that brings up all sorts of fish. Then the sorting comes: "They sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age" (verses 48–49). In both parables, the end of the age is associated with a separation, a sorting, and a burning fire (verses 40 and 50). Jesus used the phrase *the end of the age* to refer to that time in the future when the kingdom of God is established, true justice reigns, and the wicked are judged.

In Matthew 24, Jesus' disciples come to Him with a question about the end of the age: "What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). What follows is the Olivet Discourse, Jesus' summary of end times' events as they relate to Israel. The disciples thus understood *the end of the age* to mean "the final judgment that accompanies Jesus' second coming." The end of the age will be a great calamity for those who persist in their rejection of Christ. Judgment will fall swiftly and with finality. For the children of God alive during that time, the end of the age will be a time of salvation and fulfilled hope.

One "age" or era leads to another. Jesus spoke of both "this age" and "the age to come" (Matthew 12:32). The current age, the one in which we live, is the age of grace, which we also call the church age. In this dispensation, all mankind is called to repent of their sin and turn to Christ for salvation. This age has lasted for 2,000 years because God "is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). But this age must eventually come to an end. At the end of the age (literally, the consummation of the age), the age of grace will be complete, and a far more

glorious age will be ushered in. Until then, “now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2)—repentance should not be delayed.

Christians have the Lord’s promise that He will never forsake us in this world, no matter what happens: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

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