

HOW IS
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ACT 4: RESTORATION

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever." — Revelation 11:15

We have made it to the last act. What is the conclusion to this story? We certainly need to see some major changes in the world to believe that God is finished and things are better.

But how will that happen and what will it look like? Obviously there are many questions that will not be fully answered until the finish comes. Here is one certain principle in the Bible: This big story does have a fantastic ending, and it is one that 1) will bring glory to God who started the story, and 2) will be good for all of his people. That is the summation of the conclusion. Let's see what Christians believe about what the Bible says on the finishing act.

WHAT IS THE EVENT THAT WILL MARK THE COMPLETION OF THE WORK OF GOD IN THIS PRESENT WORLD?

The event that signifies the conclusion of the work of Jesus in redeeming the world is the return of the Lord Jesus. Acts 1:11 states clearly that “this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way.” An interesting aspect of this promise is that the Lord will return physically. It is not a matter of us going to Him, but Him coming to us. The Lord’s return is another way of saying that the Lord will put the last touches on His work in the world. He will set up eternity and all that He has planned for the final state of His creation.

The return of the Lord is not an escape statement. It is a conclusion statement. It is a little like my dad’s return from work every day. We knew that at the end of the day, Dad would come back home because he was done at work. Some days he worked late, and we children knew that he would come home when he finished working. One major difference with the coming of the Lord is that when He returns, His work will be totally complete. He will not need to keep coming back. There will be things He does in His return to prepare the universe for His eternal reign, but His coming is the sign of His completed work.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DETAILS CHRISTIANS AGREE WILL BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE LORD'S RETURN?

There has certainly been a lot of controversy surrounding the end of the story. Questions about rapture, millennium, signs, and many other details have divided churches through the centuries. Just do a Google search for "second coming" and you can read theories until the Lord returns—or at least for the rest of your life. There are some aspects that have been in general agreement among Christians, and here are some of them:

1) *Resurrection of the dead*

This truth is well attested in I Corinthians 15. Jesus being raised from the dead is one of the most fundamental beliefs of all Christians. That is a first fruit of the resurrection of His people. Resurrection is what the Christian looks for, even if we are not aware of it. It is the time when Christ will defeat death for each of His people and will transform our bodies from mortality to immortality. We will have bodies like His. We are not fully sure all that that means, but it does tell us that while the fall brought death, Christ will restore life in the fullest sense. The resurrection is that statement. Christ will not allow death to take our bodies while He takes our soul. Salvation includes and demands resurrection.

2) *Judgment of unbelievers and believers*

This truth is also well attested in the Bible. John 3:36 is a classic verse that affirms that "whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God remains on him." Hebrews 9:27 says it is appointed to man once to die and after this the judgment. The judgment for the one who does not believe in Jesus as his or her Savior is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15). The judgment for believers, where we will be rewarded for what we have done for the Lord, is described in 1 Corinthians 5:10.

3) *Heaven or the eternal dwelling of the redeemed*

The place we call heaven is the eternal abode of the true children of God who have been saved by the blood of the Son. Some think it is a non-physical, spiritual place somewhere. However, the Bible is clear that the eternal destiny of Christians is in the new heaven and earth.

▶▶ Describe several aspects of the new heaven and earth mentioned in Revelation 21:1-4.

WILL EVIL RISE AGAIN?

Revelation 20:10 says the devil and his fellow deceivers will be cast into the lake of fire “forever and ever.” This signifies the permanent defeat of the agents of evil. Verse 15, in the same chapter, tells of all who are opposed to the Lord being cast into the same place. All that will remain will be the ransomed children of God, who will dwell with Him forever (Revelation 22:5). Nothing evil will be able to enter into the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:26). Evil will be gone forever.

HOW SHOULD THE END OF THE STORY AFFECT US TODAY?

That is the question of the day. The Bible is very interested in telling us that God wins the war with evil. His kingdom will persevere. We also are clearly told that it should affect our lives. In I Peter 3:11-13, Peter tells us how we should respond to the coming of the Lord. We are to be holy and wait for the new heaven and earth where righteousness dwells. What do you think that would mean for you today?

Here are some other responses we should experience in light of this final story:

- ▶ Grateful worship (*Hebrews 12:28*)
- ▶ Encouragement to share with others (*I Thessalonians 4:13-18*)
- ▶ Motivation to keep serving the Lord (*I Corinthians 15, especially verse 58*)
- ▶ Challenge to spread the gospel (*Matthew 28:19-20*)
- ▶ Assembly with the redeemed to encourage each other (*Hebrews 10:25*)

HOW DOES ONE DEAL WITH ALL THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE END TIMES?

There has always been an interest on the part of humans about what happens after death or at the end of the world. This has caused much speculation and many theories. Even among Bible-believing Christians, debates have arisen around concepts such as the tribulation (is there a literal 7 years of tribulation at the end), rapture (will the church escape the tribulation), millennium (will Christ rule on the earth for 1,000 years before the end), anti-Christ, the future of Israel and many other topics. These topics are worth studying and searching the Bible to find out what God says about them. We should focus first on the matters the Bible has as a focus, as stated above. When we discuss the more controversial issues, we should seek the Scripture well and be gracious to others doing likewise. The overarching message is the victory of God and His Christ. Evil is defeated, and the triune God will reign forever and ever.

To Him alone belongs all the glory, and His people should be active in service of Him until He returns. Our hope is in Him!

BRIEF QUIZ

1) What is the one significant event that marks the completion of the story of the Bible?

2) List and briefly describe three or more realities that will happen when the Lord returns.

3) How can we deal with controversy in the discussion of the events of the end of the story?

4) What are some of the glorious aspects of heaven that make us desire to be there?



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