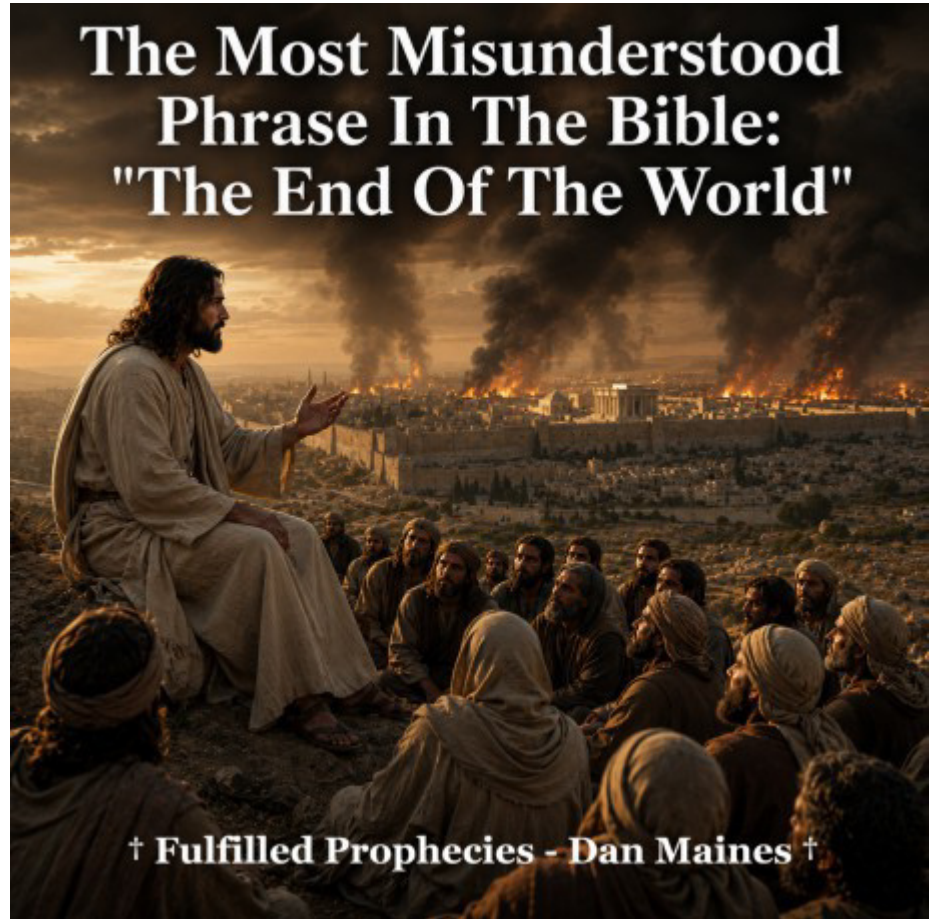


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**The Most
Misunderstood
Phrase In The
Bible: "The End Of
The World"**



By Dan Maines

The Most Misunderstood Phrase In The Bible: "The End Of The World"

Introduction

† One of the most misunderstood phrases in the Bible is "the end of the world." Many people assume it means the destruction of planet Earth, but the Greek text tells a different story. In the key passages, the phrase is "the end of the age," referring to the close of the Old Covenant age, not the end of

God's creation. (Matthew 24:3; Hebrews 9:26)

† Jesus and the apostles lived during the closing years of the Mosaic age. Their warnings concerned the end of that covenant world, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. (Luke 21:20-22; Hebrews 8:13)

† Once we understand "the end of the age," dozens of difficult prophetic passages immediately become clear because they were never describing the destruction of the planet. (Matthew 13:39-40; Matthew 24:3)

Matthew 24:3

And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

† The disciples asked about the destruction of the Temple they had just been discussing, not the destruction of planet Earth. (Matthew 24:1-3)

† The KJV has it listed as "end of the world" but the Greek word is *aion*, meaning "age," not *kosmos*, which commonly refers to the world or created order. (Matthew 24:3; Ephesians 2:2)

† Jesus answered their question by describing the end of the Old Covenant age centered on Jerusalem and the Temple. (Luke 21:20-22; Matthew 24:34)

Matthew 24:1-2

Jesus left the temple area and was going on His way when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. But He responded and said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon

another, which will not be torn down."

† Jesus' prophecy about the Temple immediately precedes the disciples' question about "the end of the age." (Matthew 24:1-3)

† The context isn't the destruction of planet Earth but the destruction of the Temple they had just been admiring. (Luke 21:5-6)

† The disciples asked one continuous question concerning the events Jesus had just described. (Matthew 24:3)

Matthew 13:39-43

and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The one who has ears, let him hear.

† Jesus again uses the phrase "end of the age," showing that the harvest belonged to the close of the covenant age. (Matthew 13:39)

† The separation of the wheat and tares was connected with the coming judgment upon that generation. (Matthew 23:36; Matthew 24:34)

† Nothing in the context suggests the destruction of planet Earth. The focus is covenant judgment and the establishment of Christ's Kingdom. (Matthew 13:41-43; Daniel 7:13-14)

Hebrews 9:26

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been revealed to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

† The writer of Hebrews declared that Christ appeared at "the end of the ages," proving that the end of the age had already arrived in the first century. (Hebrews 1:1-2)

† Christ didn't come at the end of planet Earth. He came at the end of the covenant ages that pointed to Him. (Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 10:1)

† This statement alone destroys the idea that "the end of the world" must always mean the end of human history. (Hebrews 9:26; 1 Corinthians 10:11)

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.

† The Old Covenant was already growing old and ready to disappear during the first century. (Hebrews 8:13)

† This explains why the writers repeatedly spoke of living at the end of the age. (Hebrews 9:26; 1 Corinthians 10:11)

† The Old Covenant finally vanished with the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. (Luke 21:20-22)

1 Corinthians 10:11

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

† Paul told the Corinthians that the ends of the ages had already come upon them. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

† He placed the fulfillment within the lifetime of his first-century readers, not thousands of years in the future. (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

† The apostolic Church understood that they were living during the close of the Old Covenant age. (Hebrews 8:13; James 5:8-9)

Ephesians 2:2

in which you previously walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

† Paul used a different Greek word when referring to the world's course, demonstrating that the New Testament distinguishes between "world" and "age." (Ephesians 2:2)

† This shows why translating *aion* as "world" in prophetic passages has caused centuries of confusion. (Matthew 24:3; Matthew 13:39)

† Understanding the difference between "age" and "world" removes one of the greatest obstacles to correctly interpreting Bible prophecy. (Romans 12:2; Hebrews 9:26)

† If Jesus had meant the destruction of the planet, the Greek word *kosmos* was available. Instead, He used *aion*, directing attention to the end of an age rather than the end of creation.

(Matthew 24:3; Ephesians 2:2)

Luke 21:20-22

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.

† Luke identifies the event Jesus was describing as the destruction of Jerusalem. (Luke 21:20)

† Jesus called these "the days of vengeance" in which all things written concerning that judgment would be fulfilled. (Luke 21:22)

† This historical event marks the visible end of the Old Covenant age. (Matthew 24:34; Hebrews 8:13)

Matthew 24:34

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

† Jesus placed the end of the age within the lifetime of His own generation. (Matthew 24:34)

† His audience had asked about the end of the age, and Jesus answered their question directly without changing the subject. (Matthew 24:3; Matthew 24:34)

† The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 brought the Old Covenant age to its complete and visible end. (Luke 21:20-22; Hebrews 8:13)

Historical References

† The Greek word *aion* consistently refers to an age or era, while *kosmos* refers to the world or created order. Understanding this distinction is essential to interpreting Jesus' prophetic teaching. (Matthew 24:3; Ephesians 2:2)

† The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70 marked the historical close of the Old Covenant age that Jesus and His apostles repeatedly anticipated. (Matthew 24:1-3; Luke 21:20-22)

† The writers of the New Testament repeatedly stated that they were living at the end of the ages, demonstrating that these prophecies concerned their own generation. (Hebrews 9:26; 1 Corinthians 10:11)

How It Applies To Us Today

† We can read Bible prophecy with confidence because Jesus fulfilled His promises exactly when He said He would. (Matthew 24:34)

† Understanding "the end of the age" removes unnecessary fear about passages that have often been misunderstood as describing the destruction of planet Earth. (Hebrews 9:26; 1 Corinthians 10:11)

† We now live in the New Covenant age established by Christ, enjoying the realities that the Old Covenant only foreshadowed. (Hebrews 12:22-24; Colossians 2:16-17)

Q & A Appendix

Q: Does "the end of the world" mean the destruction of planet Earth?

A: No. In the key prophetic passages, the Greek word is aion, meaning "age," referring to the end of the Old Covenant age rather than the end of the physical planet. (Matthew 24:3; Hebrews 9:26)

Q: When did the end of the age occur?

A: Jesus and the apostles placed it within their own generation, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:20-22)

Q: Why is this distinction important?

A: Understanding the difference between "age" and "world" resolves many prophetic passages that have been misunderstood for centuries. (Matthew 13:39; Ephesians 2:2)

Q: Were the apostles living at the end of the age?

A: Yes. Both Paul and the writer of Hebrews explicitly stated that the ends of the ages had come upon their generation. (1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 9:26)

Q: Why do many English Bibles say "end of the world"?

A: Older English translations often rendered the Greek word aion as "world," but the word means "age." The context determines that Jesus was speaking of the end of the Old Covenant age, not the destruction of planet Earth. (Matthew 24:3; Hebrews 9:26)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 24:1-3, Matthew 13:39-43, Hebrews 9:26, Hebrews 8:13, 1 Corinthians 10:11, Ephesians 2:2, Luke 21:20-22, Matthew 24:34

† Matthew, Luke, Paul the Apostle, the writer of Hebrews

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