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## Before Jesus Comes

**Millions of Christians believe we now live in "the last times". Within very few years Jesus Christ will return to save the planet. One writer states: "Church leaders...are uniting to release unity in the body of Christ - to prepare for Jesus' return". The view is firmly held by those who teach about the "end time".**

by James McBride

What do you expect? Is this concept accurate? Will the scattered denominations indeed come together in unity - some kind of "wedding present" (as someone put it) for Jesus? Will the vast variety of Christian belief merge in a great out-pouring of truth? Indeed will there be a mass conversion to the faith from all nations?

We can, of course, dream up a vivid end-time scenario. Pick up a handful of the myriad books on end-time prophecy and you will find little agreement. The terminology is much the same but the outcome is a kaleidoscope of conflicting concepts. The writers log on to a Biblical term (antichrist for example) then proceed to weave a pattern of their own design largely divorced from the Scriptures.

Let's look at those Scriptures and lay a foundation for a proper understanding of "the church at the end".

### Mass conversion

First we can be clear that millions out of all nations will indeed turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ. And this in the years ahead of us. They will positively respond to the preaching of the Gospel. Jesus promised that in the final generation prior to his return as King of kings "this gospel shall be preached in all the world as a witness" (Matthew 24:14). Multiple millions will respond.

But notice what will precipitate this response.

Nearly all of mankind is presently blind to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Wrote the apostle Paul: "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (II Corinthians 4:4). Jesus Christ explained this same idea to the apostle John, revealing that Satan is "the deceiver of the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). In the famed parable of the Sower (Matthew 13) he predicts the outcome of preaching as a tiny harvest. Despite dedicated

worldwide missionary effort the gospel makes little impact. Truly "many are called but few are chosen".

Certainly there are conversions. But to what? Not to the truths of Scripture. Multitudes throughout the world "give their heart to the Lord" or are "born again" but they have little concept of what this means and little submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Few wilt "count the cost" before contracting to serve him. [Request the article Coming to Baptism for a brief summary of what true conversion entails.]

How, then, will this mass conversion to the truth come about? The apostle John gives an indication. He relays to us the prophecies of Jesus concerning the end-time: "After this I looked and behold a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Revelation 7:9). A host of conversions, for these have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (v.14).

Note, though, the time-frame of this event. It is close on the heels of "the sixth seal" - a prophetic event of such cosmic physical destruction that the world will barely survive it. And prior to this is a period of terrible famine, global wars, pandemics of disease and the overthrow of many great nations. A time of horrific tribulation, in fact. A future New Horizons article will examine these seals in detail. For now, read John's description of them in Revelation chapter six.

### The Seventh Seal

Who are these men and women? John tells: "...these are they who have come out of great tribulation" (v.14).

It's important here to observe that prophecy climaxes with another - seventh - seal. It is a time of horror. And it comprises what can be described as seven trumpet judgments.

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The seventh “trumpet”, what Paul termed “the last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:52), is marked by the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the faithful. Only at the seventh seal, at this point in the prophetic timetable, does this momentous pivot of history take place! So much for the false hopes raised in Christians by self-styled prophets that they will be “raptured” before these terrible events all but destroy mankind.

### A Falling Away

But is this great multitude of new believers added to an existing unified and triumphant church?

Not according to the Bible. For we’re told that the last days would be marked by an apostasy, a falling away from the truth of the gospel (II Thessalonians 2:3). There will be, before Christ comes again, a time of severe persecution on the Church in which many will be martyred (Revelation 13:7). Again, no protecting rapture. And Jesus rhetorically asked, “When the son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8). He implied, no.

Another prophecy predicts the rise of an all-encompassing end-time world religion which opposes the true God. Satanically inspired, it will seek to exterminate all who worship God in spirit and truth. This “two-horned beast” (Revelation 13:1 1ff) is a wolf in sheep’s clothing - looking like a lamb (i.e. having the appearance of Christianity) but speaking for Satan. As Paul writes, “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness” (II Corinthians 11:14-15).

The prophet Daniel, too, was given insight into this end-time apostasy. He warns of a “shattering of the power of the holy people” (Daniel 12:7) - before the resurrection, when “many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...to everlasting life” (v.2).

The end-time will be marked, too, by a dearth of the faithful proclamation of the Word of God. Amos (ch 8:11) wrote: “...I shall send a famine upon the land; not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord”. That day may not be far distant.

But right now there’s still time. Through this and other publications God’s Word is being faithfully sown in the minds of millions around the world. When the Bible prophecies come to pass - as they surely will - those survivors who have received witness will, as they endure the agonies of great tribulation, come to repentance. They will embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior and “wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb”. Countless millions will at that time be converted to God’s way. The seed now being sown - perhaps in your mind - will mature. There will be a rich spiritual harvest as they rise from the grave or are transformed at the return to earth of their Savior.

### What Do You Expect?

Increasingly there’s awareness of the devastation caused by so-called “false memory syndrome” - wrong ideas implanted, through words, into the memory of a person under hypnosis or deep suggestion. Christians today are being bombarded by a barrage of twisted prophetic interpretations which only superficially relate to the real world of Bible prophecy.

Millions live in the false expectation that, “saved”, they can relax and await their “rapture” to the great blue yonder before “all hell” breaks loose on planet Earth. Not so. Jesus repeatedly warned of the need for vigilance, for obedience to the Word of God, for guarding our minds from a whole falsely spiritual supermarket stuffed with false prophecies and doctrines of demons.

It’s vital your expectation of future events properly reflect God’s Word and not the ravings of false prophets sung to the jingle of a bookstore till. Study God’s Word. Heed it. Do it. Unless we act on the understanding God graciously imparts to each of us, we will be in danger of deception “because [we] refused to love the truth. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion to make them believe what is false” (II Thessalonians 2:10-12).

A frightening thought.

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