

Transcript 201

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. Today, we're going to be responding to a question that we were receiving a lot lately. I assign questions once a week, and as do other members of the Got Questions staff and I've noticed and others reported to me a lot of questions about the eclipse that's coming up on the United States on April 9th, I believe. Whether this eclipse relates to the end times and some of the fervor or the excitement even about this is really caused me to like what's driving this and why? And just to give you a little background, in the 22 year history of Got Questions, I don't know how many times there's been an explosion of conflict in Israel. But I can tell you this every single time we're inundated with questions, is Jesus coming back soon? Is this a sign of the end times? Is this the conflict prophesied in the Bible, etcetera, etcetera. Or even go back just a couple of years when Russia invaded Ukraine. People were convinced this is the beginning of the Gog Magog War prophesied in Ezekiel or blood red moons. There's been books written about blood red moons which have occurred multiple times in the past decade. Is this a sign? Is that a sign?

Shea Houdmann

So our point today, our purpose today is to communicate what does the Bible actually say should be our attitude towards the end times to help to make clear up some of the confusion here. What signs can we look for? What signs shouldn't we look for? But above all, even if we are expressing some, some doubt or even some dismay at some of the stuff that we're hearing out there, please hear from all three of us. And joining me, as always, Kevin, the managing editor of GotQuestions.org and Jeff, the managing editor of BibleRef.com. Please hear us saying Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. We would want nothing more than for Jesus to come today,

tomorrow. We truly hope that's the case. But what we're our concern, our disagreement even is some of the apocalyptic fervor over stuff that really isn't what the Bible talks about should be our focus. So, so, so, Jeff, why don't you continue the conversation. What are some of the things that you're hearing out there? And how does that give you concern or pause? Or what are you thinking about in relation to the questions you're hearing?

Jeff Laird

For me, it's a lot about the the whole concept of just being freaked out about the apocalypse with every little sign of everything that always seems to happen. And I understand to an extent why some of those things could make people who are very shallow in faith or don't really have much of religious tradition, because there's a lot of uncertainty. You don't know. You hear about things like the Mayan calendar, Y2K, even when COVID hit and things like that, and people look at that and say, ohh, is this is this the end of it all? Is this the great apocalypse that's going to happen?

Jeff Laird

It's confusing sometimes and a little discouraging when I get those sorts of questions from believers because when you look at what Scripture says, none of that paranoia or hysteria is prescribed for us. Like you said, come, Lord Jesus. I I will take it now if I could get it. But Jesus never tells us you need to be really worried about this and, and you need to make sure that you're aware of exactly when it's going to happen. He never tells us when the end is going to come. And he doesn't tell us what time to be ready other than saying just be ready. Always be ready. A lot of reasons for that, partly because my own personal apocalypse could be in 2 minutes. As we're recording this right now there's a big line of storms coming through my area. I could get raptured personally right here on air. It's that kind of stuff is entirely possible. My job is not to fret about that and worry about it that, it's to be ready. So for me, it's the idea that so many people who are very invested in what the Bible says they're concerned because they see a connection to biblical events. And they don't think about things like Matthew 24:43 and 44

where the reference is made of how sudden, how quick this is going to be. First Thessalonians 5:2, Second Peter 3:10 says the same things. Actually uses the phrase like a thief in the night. It's going to be the kind of thing that if you're not actively looking for it, you're not going to know it even happened, let alone know that it's going on when it goes on.

Jeff Laird

So I usually sort of tongue in cheek will tell people that there is one surefire, absolutely great way to know that the end has come, and that's when the end has come. There is nothing else that you can know before that. It's going to be obvious. Later, Matthew 24, about verse or actually earlier verses 26-27, there's a remark where Jesus says if people come and say, oh, you know the Christ has returned and he's in this room or he's in the wilderness, you don't believe them. And the point he's making is that it's going to be like the lightning from the east to the West. When this happens, it is going to be absolutely crystal clear that it happens.

Jeff Laird

So all these other things, eclipses natural events, strange calendars, random stuff, and all. It's not so surprising that you would see non believers get that, but I'm trying to sort of push the idea to reassure those who are believers if you take what the Bible says seriously and you're inclined to worry because there's something biblical involved, just be assure that the only thing you have to do to be ready is have the right relationship with Christ and do what he wants you to do between now and then. And that's all you really need. There's nothing more complicated than that. There's nothing that you need to worry about more than that. There's nothing that you need to fret about other than that.

Kevin Stone

Yes, that's that's exactly right. We we are not to fret about it. In fact in Matthew Chapter 24 as Jesus was asked the question, what are the signs of your coming? And Jesus starts going through some of the some of the things leading up to the end times he mentions you know, the false Christs and the deceivers. He mentions wars and rumors of wars, international conflict, he

mentions famines and earthquakes. But then he says right there, as he's listing things, the end is not yet. These are just the beginning of birth pangs. And the beginning of sorrows. And so he says, he says to his disciples, don't be perturbed by this. It, these things are going to happen, but it's not a sign that the end has come yet.

Jeff Laird

Right.

Kevin Stone

Jeff, like you said, it's when the end comes, it's going to be crystal clear that it is the actually the end. And so Jesus gives assurance to his disciples that you know, there's gonna be trouble in the world. There's gonna be all kinds of of difficulties. But that's not necessarily a sign that the end has come every single time there's an earthquake or a or a famine, or a flood or an eclipse. We don't just go running after all of those things and and start, you know, doing the chicken little thing, the sky falling kind of thing.

Kevin Stone

But you know, people have done this for for so long. Jeff, I think you mentioned the, the the Y2K scare and the. But going all the way back though to the 2nd century the the Montanists were moving out of their homes and they were going to this this big open field in the middle of Asia Minor because that's what Montanas said they needed. That's where they needed to be, because the New Jerusalem was going to be coming down, it was gonna land right there in that spot and they wanted to be there when it happened. This was in the 2nd century. And so there was this big push among that group to say, hey, the the end has come and we need to be ready. We saw it again in, in history and the year 1000 as as we were ending the first Millennium. All of the Holy Roman Empire was all freaked out because they thought that this was going to be the end. And the the Pope at the time invited everybody to the the to Rome for one final mass. That was going to be it. You know, on December 31st of the year 999 that was going to be it. Of course midnight struck and nothing had happened. And so he blessed everybody. Sent them

home. But we've seen these things all the way through. Harold Camping all of his nonsense and the Millerites in the mid 1800s. It's for some reason people keep this going and want to set dates. That's one of the things that we don't want to do.

Kevin Stone

I jotted down some things here some seven things that we don't want to do in response to end times prophecy and one of them is we don't set dates. Nobody knows the day or the hour Jesus said in Matthew 25 verse 13. So it's foolish to try to guess and a lot of a lot of people have done that foolishly throughout history. We also don't try to assign special meanings to every flood, every famine, every war, every eclipse. When the end times truly begin, will know it. It's going to be very plain. The evidence is going to be overwhelming. Also, we don't try to identify the Antichrist before he's revealed. 2nd Thessalonians Chapter 2, Paul says that two things have to happen before the Antichrist is revealed. There has to be a great rebellion and there has to be the the removal of the restrainer, which we believe happens at the Rapture. But it's a very foolish thing to start pointing fingers and saying, hey, I bet that's the Antichrist and things like that. And our pointing to the different world leaders today, that is something we want to avoid. We do not want to be involved with that at all.

Kevin Stone

Also we don't stop working, we don't stop planning for tomorrow. We don't stop serving others as we you know prepare for the coming of the Lord. We don't panic also, Matthew 24, as I mentioned before, Jesus tells his disciples not to be not to be alarmed, not to panic over all of these things as we see a buildup toward the end times before the end times actually arrive. And then we want to avoid extremes so we don't ignore the end times prophecies and act like they should have no impact in our lives. But on the other hand we also don't obsess over end times prophecy.

Kevin Stone

There is. There are a lot of other topics worthy of our attention and the end times in relation to,

you know, current events, is it, it's kind of fascinating to study. And people can get sucked into that whole that whole realm so easily. We want to take it easy, studying the end times. And not take up all of our study time. We need to strike a balance here. We don't ignore it. But we also do not obsess over it. And by the grace of God, we need to avoid these these types of reactions to the end times prophecies.

Shea Houdmann

Exactly, Kevin. Well said. And so much of what you shared in there is the type of questions we're getting. The things that we see over and over again with people are obsessed or overemphasizing a certain world event. And trying to take it, basically interpreting the book of Revelation by reading the World News is if what current events are the driving force in God's program. Now, God is actually the one, He's the one orchestrating the events. He's the one in control of the timing. So it's good to be aware, like Jeff was saying earlier to be ready, but that's being ready doesn't mean being hyper focused or being obsessed. And even in the particular view of the end times that GotQuestions.org takes, there are other teachers I greatly admire and I happen to agree with on their view of the end times, that I'm not going to name names. That's not the point of this at all. Who, in a sense, almost like, try to profiteer off stuff like this. And every time there's an event, they write a new book. And the book sells hundreds of thousands of copies. And it turns out that wasn't. I really didn't have anything to do with the end times at all.

Shea Houdmann

So I I see this kind of stuff over and over again. It's just it's frustrating just discouraging. And Kevin, as you were talking about the main reason besides the Bible says not to, you don't make predictions about dates and the end times is because when you're wrong, it is a tremendous discouragement to all those who were believing you. It causes people to actually doubt that Jesus is going to return. It results in the attitude is where is this coming that you've been promised long, long ago that think it's in Second Peter, where he talks about that with people having that attitude. We don't want to foster that. We don't want to encourage that with with the

eclipse that's going on soon, I'm not sure when this episode will air. Probably a day or two after the eclipse. So if we're wrong and something happens, Jesus returns. This episode will never go online, so I guess we'll see, but so many people are.

Jeff Laird

Very low risk that we're taking.

Shea Houdmann

Yes, very low risk. The path of the eclipse seven years ago, we're getting a lot of these questions then. Evidently they supposedly they crossed over 7 different cities, United States named Salem, which is the word for peace. And supposedly this one passes over 7 cities with the name of Nineveh. I didn't know there were seven cities in the United States named Ninevah. And Ninevah is the city in the book of Jonah that God threatened to destroy, they repented, but then God did later destroy Ninevah. So the warning supposedly is, God gave us seven years of peace, and now the the judgments coming. Well, the whole thing of this is like, what in Bible prophecy would lead us to believe that eclipses occurring in the United States has anything to do with the end times? I mean the end times are not the United States focused at all. We get questions quite frequently, what does the United States have to do with the end times? And to be honest, the United States has never even explicitly mentioned in the Bible. So to make everything so US focused, that's a faulty American mindset. I mean, if there was a eclipse over the Nation of Israel, in coordination with a maybe the Jewish Passover or the Day of Atonement or something like that, OK then. Now we're talking a little closer to biblical science, but even then, the Bible nowhere says that any event, like an eclipse or a blood Red Moon.

Shea Houdmann

Or recently been reading the news that a red Heffer was born recently in Israel. And what's what's all the thing about this? Well, for the temple to be rebuilt, a certain type of incense required ashes from a sacrifice red Heffer. So if a red heifer is born and it is red, Heffer is a cow, by the way. My wife would 30 years ago, would have had to tell me what Heffer was. Thankfully,

I know that now. But for incense, for the new temple that's being built so. And I've seen headlines, first Red Heffer born in Israel and 100 years. Like well, Israel didn't even exist over 100 years ago. And I've seen the same headline 10 years ago, and 20 years ago, and five years ago. Read first read Heffer born in Israel and 100 years like well, which which is it? Is this why does this keep happening that supposedly the first red heifer born in Israel? So it's these things that interesting yes, and the temple is going to rebuild according to the old testament law. A red heifer, would have to be sacrificed. But this is the one. That that's the faulty attitude.

Shea Houdmann

We're focusing on something that happened that maybe the Bible mentions, and it's identifying specific. No, this is the one you've seen these fail over and over again. And as I said earlier results in discouragement. So let's get our minds off of one, the Hyper American focus that American Christians tend to have focused on the nation of Israel, which is the focus of Bible prophecy. And also looking to signs is motivations to get ready, not reasons to freak out. Not reasons to start setting dates or is doing some of the crazy stuff that's happened in the past. The Bible's focus on the end times like in First Thessalonians when it talks about the rapture, encourage one another with these words. That's what Eschatology is supposed to do, encouraging us that yes Jesus is coming, he will return. He will make all things right. Our salvation is at hand. Those that should be our attitude, not date setting, not making bigger deals out of things than we should, those sorts of things. It's just sad. It's frustrating to see it over again, but again like I said at the beginning, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. We would absolutely love for not even next Tuesday but today, right now for this podcast to end by the three of us being joining Christ in his second coming. We would love to see that.

Jeff Laird

There's a community of people that they refer to as preppers. And some of them get a bad rap. Some of them don't. I am the kind of person who likes to be prepared. I don't think that the typical normal prepper would consider me one of them because they probably don't do

enough in that sense. But the the mindset behind the prepper attitude is not, let's comb through the news and constantly be paranoid about what event is going to happen or what's what's going on with this or with that. They keep their eyes on what's going on. But the typical preppers mantra really is just just be ready at any moment because at any moment these things could happen. And to some extent that's the attitude that we're supposed to have about this as believers is not that we're supposed to be focused on, I need to recognize this before it gets here. No you need to put your time and energy into doing the things God has asked us to do between when he left and when he's coming back.

Jeff Laird

And something that also drives that paranoia sometimes, like you were saying, Shea is, there's this this attitude where a lot of times people don't care about something until it happens to them, and then it must be the most important and impactful thing ever. Solar Eclipse has happened every 18 months, give or take about three times every two years if my understanding of it is right. And the only reason that we have them, we don't have them all the time is just because the moons orbit, you know the angle that it hula hoops around the earth is just a little bit offset from the angle from us to the sun. So if it wasn't for that every single time the moon went around, it would block some of the sun as it goes by. We look at the stars, we look at those things for signs and for seasons and things like that. But this is something that really does happen very often.

Jeff Laird

Scripture talks about lightning in connection to the end times. Not every lightning strike or rumble of thunder near my house is something that I should interpret as well, I wonder if that's maybe it, if that's maybe the end. Well, that kind of thing happens everywhere and happens all the time. So it's OK for us to sometimes look at some things and say, look, God designed the universe to do certain things. This is just not that strange. This is not that unusual in the first place. And like you were saying, you would think that if it was going to be really important, then

probably an eclipse that catches a little bit of Mexico, the United States and a tiny bit of Canada is probably not going to be the sign that we're looking for. It's it would be something that's a little bit more interesting in that sense.

Jeff Laird

So my advice to everybody when they talk about this, when they get worried about it is always just to say have that sort of sane prepper mindset. I mean, you can be paranoid. There are some people who take the prepper thing way too far. For anybody who's seen a movie from the 90s, there's a couple living out in the desert who take it too far. And if you don't know that movie, don't bother. But if you don't have that attitude, that's sort of a good thing. You want to be ready, but you don't want to be so paranoid that your life is obsessed with preparing for something you can't control. You can't stop, and you can't make happen any sooner. Just be ready. Spread the gospel. Live the way God wants us to live. Understand that sometimes strange things happen. And when it's going to happen, we're going to know it.

Kevin Stone

Excellent, Jeff. In fact, that's a that's a good lead in to my other list. I gave a list of seven things that we don't want to do in response to biblical prophecy about the end times and well, I also have a list of seven things that I think that we should do in response to end times prophecy. The first one is to make sure that we are saved, being prepared, spiritual. We need to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. Have we received the salvation that Jesus offers by grace through faith? Are we really trusting in him, or are we trusting ourselves or trusting some other thing? It's this is the most important question is are you trusting Christ? If so, then you are prepared for the end times.

Kevin Stone

Also we need to continue to work our job and we need to continue to care for our families, need to continue to share the gospel. Basically to do the work that God gave us to do. Occupy till I come. Jesus used that sentence in a in a parable that he told in Luke Chapter 19. But it applies

to us I think very well as we've been given things to do by the Lord himself. In fact, we are to abound in the work of Christ knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord, 1st Corinthians 15:58. We know there's a reward coming and we need to be faithful in and actually abounding in that work that he gave us to do.

Kevin Stone

We need to watch and pray Jesus said so that we do not enter into temptation. We need to be watchful. Need to be people of prayer and keep those prayers going. Need to refuse to walk in sin that we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. That's from First John two verse 28. Don't want to be caught unaware, so don't want to be caught you know, doing something that we shouldn't be doing when he returns. We want to be able to stand before him confidently and unashamed. Also need to be sharing the gospel with others. Everyone needs to know what Jesus has done for them, and so we have the responsibility to share the gospel. We work for the night is coming when no one can work, Jesus said. And so we need to be praying that the Lord of the Harvest would send forth laborers and of course, our hand needs to be raised as a volunteer saying Lord send me as well.

Kevin Stone

And then #7, we need to continue to worship the Lord and to praise his name. That never stops, right. We worship him and we praise him. If the Antichrist were standing right here in front of me, slapping me around, my responsibility would not change. I would have the responsibility to still worship the Lord and to praise his name. And so we need to keep our priorities straight. And those are some things I think would be good responses to the end times prophecies.

Shea Houdmann

Kevin again well said. This bring us back to what our attitude should be like Jeff with the the be ready, Kevin with your focus on keep doing the things we're supposed to be doing. Until Jesus returns our mission is not changed. Our mission is still the Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything that

Jesus commanded. That's our mission, and that does not change until Jesus comes back. Our mission is never to, well, I my work here is done because I'm convinced Jesus is coming back next Monday. Does precisely the wrong attitude to have. And for those out there who love studying eschatology, please, by all means, please keep studying eschatology, but don't be so focused on the end that you forget the now. That there are still people out there who need Jesus, they're your family, your loved ones, your church needs you to be actively serving and ministering and encouraging. We need to be spending time in prayer. There's so many things the Bible calls us to do that we often get distracted by when we want to focus on end times events or signs of the end times.

Shea Houdmann

But again, let me conclude with this, that, come, Lord Jesus. We would like nothing more than for Jesus to come back now because we recognize this world is not our home. Revelation 21:22 is what describes the new heavens and the Earth, where where we'll be spinning eternity. I I want to be there like now, but until that time comes until Jesus returns, Jesus claims those who are his own and takes us to be with him forever, our duty here is to be faithful and sharing the gospel and loving one another, encouraging one another, serving him and his church, proclaiming the gospel, etcetera. And we should never allow love for the end times or being intrigued by a certain event to take our eyes off what's truly most important. So Amen. Come Lord Jesus. This has been the Got Questions podcast on what are the signs of the end times? Got questions? Bible has answers. We'll help you find them.