

SESSION 1: *Positive Trends, People and Events in the End Times*

I. WHY STUDY THE END TIMES: INTRODUCTORY PREMISES

- A. We must study the End Times because the generation in which the Lord returns is the most dramatic generation in human history with two great *extremes*.

Before Jesus returns, the nations will witness the greatest revival and the most severe pressures (God's judgments, Satan's rage, man's sin) that have ever been seen.

- B. We must study the End Times because the generation in which the Lord returns is the most *written about* generation in Scripture.

More than 100 chapters in the Bible have the End Times as their main theme.

- C. We must study the End Times because the Scriptures regarding the subject reveal Jesus' *heart and leadership*.

The four Gospels (totaling 89 chapters) give us a record of Jesus' heart and power at His first coming when He accomplished redemption. In a similar way, the Scriptures regarding the end of the age (more than 100 chapters) reveal Jesus' heart and power as He takes over the leadership of the whole earth at His second coming.

In other words, the Gospels and the end-time Scriptures reveal the same Jesus and the same power by the same Holy Spirit in the same Bible. For example, the Book of Revelation is called "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" because it reveals His heart, power and leadership.

The Book of Revelation is not an optional subject for the Church.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. (Rev. 1:1)

- D. We must study the End Times because the generation in which the Lord returns is the one generation God has chosen to reveal with *prophetic signs* that increase in intensity as we get closer to Jesus' return.

These prophetic signs include supernatural signs in the heavens, trends in society, and political, military, religious, scientific, technological, and economic developments. God calls it wisdom to understand (Rev. 13:18, 17:9). This is not mere curiosity; it is an issue of life and death.

1. The Scripture requires those living in the generation in which the Lord returns to know it and prepare accordingly.

Jesus and Paul emphasized the know-ability of the prophetic signs of the End Times (Matt. 24:32-34; Luke 21:25-29; 1 Thess. 5:1-6; 2 Thess. 2:1-11)

2. God promised to give prophetic signs in the generation in which the Lord returns as an expression of His mercy, so people can make the necessary preparations for what is coming.

These prophetic signs serve the Church, like a weather station that signals trouble before it comes, so people can prepare and save lives. Consider the example of the Southeast Asia tsunami caused by the Sumatra earthquake on December 26, 2004.

Jesus rebuked Israel for being unable to read the prophetic signs at His first coming (Matt. 16:3). Jesus taught that Israel came under judgment for being unresponsive to God because the Israelites did not know the time of their visitation from God.

For days will come...when your enemies will...level you, and your children to the ground...because you did not know the time of your visitation. (Luke 19:43-44)

- E. Studying information about the End Times is one of the keys to *preparedness* for it.

It is important to study the End Times because it prepares the Church to be victorious in the time of the most extreme glory and the most extreme pressure in history. It provides the Church a compass in the storm. We need to rightly interpret the crisis for the majority.

We gain confidence in God's sovereignty, and knowing Scripture inspires the certainty of victory. It gives us revelation of Jesus' beauty and provides fuel for the prayer movement.

- F. The prepared prophetic Church alone will have the answer to keep multitudes from being *offended* at God in the End Times.

We will be able to answer why a God of love would allow and even orchestrate the events in the Great Tribulation.

The Church must also know how to live so as to avoid or minimize this judgment.

The purpose of God's judgments is to remove all (false props) that hinders love so that multitudes of people are saved and grow mature in love.

- G. Scriptures about the End Times are *literal* unless specifically identified as symbolic by the Scripture.

- H. The Scriptures on the End Times were written to be *understood* by all, since they were written for all nations.

The majority of people throughout history have been uneducated peasants. It is not true that the end-time Scriptures are too complicated. All believers can and must understand the book of Revelation and end-time prophecy. These are not optional reading designed for eccentric Christians.

I. I believe we are in the *beginning* stages of the End Times, but whether the Great Tribulation followed by Jesus' Coming begins in five years or 50 years, I do not know. It is probably closer to 50 than five.

J. A common misperception is that *most* generations believed they were in the End Times.

It is true that a very small group (probably less than 1%) of every generation thought they were at the end.

Only twice has there been a universal sense that it was the time of the end, in the generation of the early apostles and this one.

K. Summary: Why study the End Times?

- It prepares the Church to be *victorious* in love with power during the most dramatic time in history.
- It prepares the Church to *participate* in the coming revival instead of neglecting or resisting it.
- It prepares the Church to rightly interpret the *crisis* instead of being offended at God by it.
- It awakens the Church to *urgency* in intercession in knowing their prayers can minimize evil and increase victory in specific regions (Joel 2:13-14; Zeph. 2:3).
- It strengthens our *confidence* in God's sovereignty by knowing that He is in control and is never surprised.

L. Some common lies related to end-time prophecies:

Lie #1: They are not *relevant* but are just for the curious.

Lie #2: They are to be interpreted *symbolically* instead of taken literally.

Lie #3: They are impossible to understand except by a *scholar*.

Lie #4: The Church in every generation believed *they* were the final generation.

II. IMPORTANT THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND ABOUT THE OMEGA COURSE

- A. This course is a very general introduction, designed to acquaint people with the most important and basic trends, people and events of the End Times.

My approach will be to declare what I understand as Biblical conclusions without taking time in this course to thoroughly document them from the Scripture. However, we provide articles that establish the scriptural basis of each main point in the Omega Course.

See www.IHOP.org (look for the Omega Course) to find much more extensive presentations of each subject. We have a place on the website for you to ask questions and receive answers and to find recommended tapes and books about the End Times.

- B. The Omega Course team has a conviction that differs from the popular view that the Church will be raptured at any minute and therefore miss the coming revival and crisis in the Great Tribulation.

We honor the genuineness and godliness of many who hold this view, but see it as a serious mistake that will leave multitudes unprepared and offended at Jesus during the Great Tribulation. We must get our end-time theology from the Scripture and not from popular trends.

- C. If you are new to studying the End Times, be prepared for the fact that the Jesus seen in many End Times Scriptures is very different from the Jesus that some in the Western Church think of.

Jesus is not a heavenly Santa Claus committed to make life easy and happy for all in this age. He is a zealous warrior King coming to establish His Father's glory (Ezek. 36:22-23) and vindicate His persecuted Bride (Rev. 19:2).

He kills multitudes and dashes hostile nations to pieces as He takes over the leadership of the earth (Ps. 2:8-9; 110:6; Is. 63:1-6; Rev. 14:20).

It is important that we are loyal to what Scripture says and not our Christian traditions or religious sentiments.

- D. I do not ask anyone to quickly accept my views; rather, I urge you to challenge them fiercely and boldly as you refuse any idea that you cannot clearly see in Scripture for yourself.

The old saying, "Be a Berean" is an appropriate one as we study Jesus' leadership in the End Times.

The Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if the things that Paul said were so (Acts 17:10-11).

- E. I urge you to take time for the small group discussions.

The learning process is greatly enhanced by wrestling with the various ideas in dialogue with others who are hungry for truth.

- F. *Notice: I use the New King James translation of the Bible unless stated otherwise.*

III. DAY OF THE LORD: THE TWO EXTREMES RELATED TO JESUS' RETURN

For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)

I will send you Elijah...before...the great and dreadful day of the LORD. (Mal. 4:5)

- A. The Great Day of the Lord refers to the unusual events (*positive* and *negative*) that will escalate in the final three years before Jesus returns.

It is one of the prominent themes in the Scripture (mentioned nearly 100 times). It is "His Day" because it is a unique time frame in which Jesus acts in the earthly arena in great power for His people and against His enemies.

He openly shows Himself as the warrior King who aggressively confronts sin.

(Is. 2:10-22; 4:1-6; 11:1-15; 13:6-9; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 1-3; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph 1:7, 12, 14-18, 20; Zech. 14:1-4; Mal. 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:2-3; 2 Thess. 2:2-3; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:17).

- B. The two-fold nature of the day of the Lord is seen in the great blessing it releases for those who call on Jesus and it is terrible in judgement for those who refuse Him.

- C. It will be a great Day to those who call on *Jesus'* name because they will experience the greatest outpouring of the Spirit in history (Joel 2:28-32).

- D. It will be a very terrible Day to the *rebellious* who will witness the most severe outpouring of God's judgments ever seen (Rev. 6-20).

Jesus' judgments will shake all that can be shaken on earth (Hag. 2:6-8; Heb. 12:26).

The nations of the earth will experience military invasions by the Antichrist's worldwide evil empire (Rev. 13), while God's judgments are poured out, as seen in the Book of Revelation with the Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets and Seven Bowls of wrath (Rev. 6; 8-9; 16-19).

- E. The prophets asked, "Who can *endure* the Day of the Lord events?"

In other words, who can experience God's favor, deliverance and power in this unique time frame? This will be the most relevant question that must be answered by all as the best and worst time for the Church and all nations (including the USA and Israel).

IV. THE GREAT DAY OF THE LORD: POSITIVE TRENDS

- A. The greatest revival and outpouring of the Spirit in history results in a *victorious* Church full of God's glory.

(Eph. 4:13; 5:26-27; Matt. 16:18; John 17:21-26; Acts 2:17-21; Rev. 7:9; 12:11; 15:2; 19:7-8; 22:17).

It will include miracles that were seen in the book of Acts and the book of Exodus, yet combined and multiplied on a global scale.

- B. The Great Ingathering of Souls will possibly be over 1 *billion* (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 5:9; 14:6).

A multitude...no one could number of all nations...out of the Tribulation... (Rev. 7:9, 14)

- C. The salvation of Israel (Rom. 11:12-15, 25-26) will occur as the Church provokes Israel to *jealousy* by standing with them in affliction and operating in the power of God.

- D. The spirit of *prophecy* will operate in the Church and rest on every believer.
(Acts 2:17; Jer. 31:9; 23:20; Dan. 11:33-35; Is. 26:9; Rev. 11:3-6; 18:20; Matt. 17:11; Mal. 4:6).

I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy... (Acts 2:17)

- E. The *bridal paradigm* of the Kingdom will strengthen the Church resulting in believers with courageous love as they encounter Jesus as the Bridegroom God (Rev. 22:17).

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" (Rev. 22:17)

- F. The worship and prayer movement will operate in great *authority* (Luke 18:7-8; Matt. 21:13; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-5; 22:17; Is. 62:6-7; 25:9; 27:2-5, 13; 30:18-19; 42:10-13; Joel 2:12-17).

- G. There will be supernatural *provision* of food and water, etc.

God will manifest His provision like He did in the Exodus. God provided all the needs of His people as they journeyed through the wilderness. He caused food to fall from the sky and He brought water from a rock.

As in the days when you came out of...Egypt, I will show them wonders. (Mic. 7:15)

- H. There will be supernatural *direction* by prophetic revelation (Jer. 31:9; Joel 2:28) as the Lord directs His people to safety, to provision (food, water), to reconnect in relationships, to be at the right place to escape earthquakes, bombs, or the ambush of the enemy.

- I. There will be supernatural *protection* (pockets of mercy).

The "Goshen Principle" (Ex. 8:22-23; 9:4-6, 26; 10:23; 11:7) was seen in the time of the plagues of Egypt.

God did not allow His judgments to touch Goshen, where His people lived. Israel's livestock did not die (Ex. 9:4-6), they had no hail (Ex. 9:26), no swarms of flies (Ex. 8:22) and had light (Ex. 10:23).

I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there...23 I will make a difference between My people and your people. (Ex. 8:22-23)

- J. There will be cities of *refuge* (pockets of mercy) - areas where God's people are protected from God's judgment (Rev. 7:2-3; 9:4; Ezek. 9:4-6).

God's judgments can be minimized or averted in various regions by prayer and obedience. Our prayers make a difference in our quality of life (Joel 2:13-14; Ps. 91:5-7). The disaster zone can become a revival center.

Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth...it may be that you will be hidden (protected) in the day of the LORD's anger (judgments) (Zeph. 2:3).

I also withheld rain from you...I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. 8 So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water... (Amos 4:7-8)

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night...6 nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. (Ps. 91:5-7)

V. THE PRIMARY POSITIVE PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN THE END TIMES

A. Jesus' Second Coming to establish His Millennial *Kingdom* is the ultimate prophetic theme in the End Times (Rev. 19:11-21; Zech. 14; 1 Thess. 4-5; Matt. 24; Luke 21; Mark 13).

1. Jesus will physically appear in the sky to all the people of the earth when He returns to permanently live on the earth. He will sit on a Throne as King and rule over all other kings (Rev. 19:15-16). He will establish His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6:10)

2. The next stage of the Father's plan is for Jesus to rule as King on the earth for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4-6).

This is commonly referred to as the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

The term millennium is from the Latin "mille" (a thousand), and "annus" (a year).

They shall be priests of God....and shall reign with Him a 1,000 years. (Rev. 20:6)

3. Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem in perfect righteousness and continual peace as He restores it to the conditions of the Garden of Eden.

His Kingdom on earth will affect every sphere of life (political, economic, educational, agricultural, family, media, arts, technology, environment, social institutions, etc).

(Rev. 20:1-6; Is. 2:1-4; 9:6-9; 11:1-16; 51:1-8; 60-62; 65:17-25; Ps. 2; 110; Matt. 6:10; 17:11; 19:28; 28:19; Acts 3:21).

Jerusalem shall be called the Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. (Jer. 3:17)

4. Resurrected believers with glorified bodies will rule with Jesus over the governments of the millennial earth.

(Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5; Matt. 19:28; 20:21-23; 25:23; Luke 19:17-19; 22:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom 8:17).

- B. The *Rapture* of the Church occurs as Jesus “catches up” all believers in the air from one end of the sky to the other.

The Rapture will not be a secret event, but a dramatic one witnessed by all believers and unbelievers. It will occur in context to Jesus’ Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:13-5:11).

The fact of the rapture is agreed on by nearly all believers through history. The timing of it as before the Tribulation is an error that confuses some.

- C. The Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3-6) are two prophets who will preach with great power for three years during the Great Tribulation.

They do great miracles like Moses and Elijah did (Mal. 4:5).

- D. 144,000 Jews will be sealed (Rev. 7:4-8, 14:1-5). This will result in them being supernaturally protected by God so that they cannot be harmed by the end-time judgments. Other believers (Gentiles) will also be supernaturally protected by God from harm (Rev. 9:4, Ezek. 9:6)

- E. The Marriage Supper of the *Lamb* occurs in context to Jesus’ coming (Rev. 19:7-10). The first descent of the New Jerusalem to earth also occurs at this time (Rev. 21:2, 9; 3:12).

Session 1 Study Guide Questions

- What could studying the End Times teach me about Jesus' heart and leadership over my life?
- How might I prevent myself from becoming offended at God as the end-time drama unfolds?
- How have I interpreted scriptures about the End Times in the past, and how might I study them differently in the future?
- What effect would it have on me to face the End Times with the perspective of being the Bride of Christ?