

## End Times – February 18

**Introduction** - Eschatology is the study of Bible Prophecy and it's a fascinating subject. Of course, some Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled, as with the first coming of Jesus, empires that would come and go and so on, and those fulfilled prophecies give us the assurance that things that haven't happened yet – will happen.

There's no doubt that we are living in a troubled and difficult world and it certainly appears that the groundwork is being laid for the return of Jesus and what the Bible calls The Last Days – In fact, we see many signs already starting to be fulfilled – and for some – that is very scary – it causes fear – and so it's my hope that as we conduct this study, we can put those fears to rest and put our Hope in Jesus. We've done a study on the book of Daniel and we've done a study on the book of Revelation, and we'll be going back to those books but we are also going to be looking at what Jesus had to say about the end times as well as looking at some of the epistles, some of the letters of Paul and Peter for example, we'll be looking at some of the Old Testament Prophets like Ezekiel and Isaiah – this is really looking at Scripture as a whole and what not just one or two books of the Bible.

Now before we get started there are a couple of things we need to address – and the first thing is that we need to acknowledge from the very beginning that this is an area of study that has some controversy associated with it. There are a lot of disagreements within the church itself about what the Bible has to say about this important topic. There are some out there who do very poor Bible interpretation and they come up with some really crazy stuff – there are some who do good interpretation but come to different conclusions. And so throughout this study I will present to you the major theories in some of the controversial areas and you can decide for yourself what you believe – I'll certainly tell you which one I think is correct and why – but you ultimately have to make your own choice. Regardless of our perspective on End Times, we, as

followers of Jesus can still agree on the most important things. I love what James Macdonald says on this – He says “on the majors, conviction, on the minors, tolerance, in all things love.”

**John 13:35** “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Of course, this brings me to my little theology lesson that I have to give before teaching on any controversial topic – theology simply put is the study of God – literally it’s words about God – but there are three categories when it comes to theology – and they are **Dogma** (which James called the majors) – those are things like the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, The Resurrection, Jesus is God – those are things that you absolutely have to believe in order to be a Christian. Basically, if it’s in the Apostles Creed, it’s Dogma. Those are what James referred to as the Majors.

The next category is **Doctrine**, Now every Dogma is also a Doctrine, but not every Doctrine is a dogma - these are things that tend to break us up into denominations or categories as Christians. There is the doctrine of Pre-Destination – this is part of reformed theology or what is known as Calvinism. It says that God decided who is saved and who is not – that you have been chosen and therefore you do not have free will. There are many Presbyterian churches who believe this. On the other side of that coin are Armenians, of which I am one. We believe that God foreknew who would choose Him and who would not and those who chose Him God has elected to save, but we have free will. Just because God foreknew doesn’t mean that we still don’t have a choice. Wesleyan’s would fall under that category. Baptism – while being baptized as a Christian would be Dogma, at what age (Infant vs 13 and over), and the method of baptism (Sprinkle vs immersion) would be Doctrine. These are the minors of which we should have tolerance.

And then everything else is **opinion**. Was the earth created in six literal 24-hour days? Was the earth created in six periods of time? The fact

God created the Heavens and the Earth is Dogma, and those things I just mentioned are opinion. They aren't salvation issues. And almost everything we are going to talk about during this study – falls into this category of opinion. The fact that Jesus is going to return, that's Dogma, which would also make it Doctrine – but everything else we are going to talk about is opinion - and so, as we discuss this – as James said – in all things love. Now just a side note – and not to confuse you – but for some churches and denominations – what we consider opinion – they might consider doctrine and/or dogma, but that is their choice.

**Any Questions** before we begin?

Okay – so now that we've talked about that – let me give you the goals, or **objectives** for this Bible Study.

1. To have a foundational knowledge of the Bible's teaching on end times.
2. **To** understand the different beliefs when it comes to end times and make an informed decision as to what you believe.
3. **To** gain confidence in your ability to understand biblical prophecy.
4. **To** grow in your relationship with Jesus through the Study of His Word.
5. **To** live a more Christ-like life in response to what you learn.

Now what I've decided to do for this study, since I really liked how our Chronological life of Jesus flowed and really opened up our understanding of the Gospels is to present this in a chronological order. So that means that like with our last study, we are going to be jumping all around in Scripture. I will give you a reading assignment for the next week and I'll try to give you some handouts as well.

And so, the very first thing I want to do is give you an overview of the end times and then we'll dig down into each section and see what the Bible has to say about it. And we're going to start with **a timeline** – just so you know – there are things we are going to talk about that are not on

the timeline yet – because there are different theories about them – but we will put them in when we get to discussing them. Also – some of these dates are approximate.

**So starting out** – we have eternity past – and at that point the only thing that existed was God, the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. This occurred in eternity past. Before time even existed. **Gen 1:1** says “**In the Beginning, the beginning of what? Space, Time and Matter, God created the Heavens and the Earth.**”

God created everything – you all, or most of you know where I stand on this personally, if you’re not sure, head on to our website and check out the messages on Science and the Bible. But after God created humanity, Adam and Eve – it doesn’t say how long had passed – but at some point, they sin and that causes humanity to be cursed and we now succumb to death. Our relationship with God was broken and He has been working to redeem us ever since – along comes Noah and things get really bad, plus there are some rebellious angels who sin as well by having sexual relations with human women – God decides to destroy almost everything and start over – and so he tells Noah to build an ark – there is a great flood – whether it’s a locally global flood (which means that it covered all the area where humans happened to be at that time (the Mesopotamia area) or it was a truly global flood – well that falls into the opinion category – humanity starts over, somewhere around 2000 BC or a little later we have Abram who God changes his name to Abraham and God makes a covenant with him that out of his seed will be born a nation – God’s chosen Nation – Israel. Somewhere in the 1500’s to 1600’s BC we find Moses who following God’s orders, and with God’s help, leads Israel out of bondage from Egypt – there’s the Exodus and God brings us the Law. This is where we get the Old Testament writings beginning – Moses wrote the Pentateuch or the first five books of the Bible which are teaching Israel about God, who He is, who He isn’t (he isn’t the gods

of Egypt from which they just spent hundreds of years in captivity) – And of course the Law itself. Eventually we come to David who becomes King of Israel, He is the lineage that Jesus will ultimately come from. And it's from David to Malachi – so from about 1000 BC to 400 BC that we have the prophets – people like Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah and Malachi – Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament – **from there** God is silent for about 400 years. We call this the intertestamental period. As we learned in our last study, Jesus was born around September 11, 3BC and He lived until about April 3, 33AD where He was crucified. He rose from the dead on around Sunday April 5, 33AD and it was then that the church age began. The age of Grace. The writings of the New Testament began around 45AD which is about when we believe Mark was written. And the final book – the book of Revelation was written about 95AD although some have put Revelation earlier than that.

And we continue to live in the age of Grace or the Age of the Church.

As we'll soon see, because this is where our study will truly begin, Jesus told us to look for signs of His return. I believe many of those signs we are seeing now – but at some point, **the final end times events will occur.** Jesus will call the church to be in His presence – we call this the rapture – it's not on the timeline yet because there are three different theories as to when that will happen – so we'll talk about that, but a seven-year period that we call the Tribulation period will occur. A world leader known as the antichrist will appear on the scene and God will start pouring out His wrath on the earth, this is humanity's last chance to accept Jesus as their savior. We'll see a series of 7 seal judgments and 7 trumpet judgments, and then after 3 ½ years, at the midpoint of the tribulation will begin the most series and harshest judgments the 7 bowl judgments. At the end of that 7 year period, Jesus will return, He will set up His kingdom here on earth for a 1000 year or millennial period (there are different theories about this as well, but the antichrist, another of his

henchmen and Satan are bound during this period – at the end of it, Satan will be released “for a short time” there will be one final rebellion and then Satan will be imprisoned for all eternity, the Great White Throne Judgment will occur, God will create a New Heaven and a New Earth and we will live with Him for the remainder of eternity.

Obviously, we are going to get into a lot of detail on some of this and so this is just a high-level overview. As we talk about things, we’ll “blow up” our time line and add things into it.

So – are you ready to begin?

Alright – well the first thing we are going to talk about, and that will take up the rest of today is the general timing of when these end time things are going to occur and we’re actually going to go back to around Tuesday March 31, 33AD or so – it’s towards the end of the day and Jesus has just been teaching and meeting with all these different groups near the Temple, and He takes some of His disciples, Peter, James, John & Andrew and they’re heading out of the Temple and this is recorded in Matthew 24:1-2; Mk 13:1-2 and Lk 21:5-6.– it’s a marvelous structure – not quite as grand as Solomon’s Temple or the second Temple – but Herod’s Temple which likely wasn’t even fully completed yet was still incredible and they point this out to Jesus and He says to them **“You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”** And that prophecy came to pass around 37 years later in 70AD when Rome surrounded Jerusalem, and destroyed it – they burned anything and everything they could – the Gold in the Temple melted and ran in between the cracks of the rocks and so when the Romans retrieved that Gold, they literally overturned every stone. **The only thing that remains** today is an outer retaining wall and a basic platform of where the temple once stood. **You can go** there today and see **many of the stones** laying in ruin – but the original temple is completely gone. **Not a single stone** remains standing. Man

They head on up to the Mount of Olives which overlooks the temple and they **ask Jesus** “**Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?**”

Now In their minds, they are probably asking “when is the Temple going to be destroyed – when is the end of the age of the Jewish Temple”

This is one of the things that you will find when it comes to Bible prophecy – is that there are some who hold to what is called **preterism**.

That is – everything Jesus talked about, everything Revelation talks about – that already happened in history. The term preterist comes from the Latin word that means “past”. And the year 70 is central to this. They argue that Jesus returned along with the resurrection, judgment, and new heavens and new earth – all occurred in 70AD – and that the millennial kingdom occurred from when Jesus ascended into Heaven until then. All you have to do is read the Bible, even a cursory literal or literary reading of the Bible and what the Bible says simply doesn’t line up with this believe.

Some believe what’s called a **Historical view (or continuous view)** of Bible Prophecy. The historical view is that Revelation is a progressive history of the church from the first century to the end of time. The seal, trumpet and bowl judgments are all synchronous or occurring at the same time/ in parallel. So – we are living in the middle of the Tribulation, and have been for thousands of years. I find huge problems with this which we’ll discover as we get into this study.

And then others, like me, believe in a **futurist view** of the Bible. That is, yes – there are certainly some things that have already happened – like the destruction of the Temple in 70AD – at the time the gospels were written – this hadn’t happened yet – so it was still considered future prophecy – but it has happened since then – but many of the events Jesus, Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Paul, Peter, and John in Revelation talked

about have not occurred yet – or are just really starting to occur and unfold in our lifetimes. And so that’s the view I hold.

Anyway – **They ask** **when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age.** And they still don’t quite understand that Jesus is going to die on a cross and be resurrected and then ascend into Heaven where He will remain for thousands of years. So when they say “the sign of your coming and the end of the age” they are thinking “when are you going to come into your kingdom here on earth and when will this age of pharisees and roman rule all end?”

Of course, in one sense – the kingdom of God had already come when Jesus came and started His ministry right? And that continues today in what we call the Age of Grace or the Church Age. But don’t confuse that with the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 and you’ll see why when we get there. That’s what the Historicists do. But there are things that are unique to the millennial kingdom that have obviously not happened. So we’re definitely not there as you will see.

Now before I get into the signs – Jesus made clear this one thing.

We will not know exactly when He will return. But the Bible says that we can know the General time.

**Jesus points** to a fig tree and He says “**From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.** <sup>33</sup> **So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.** <sup>34</sup> **Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”** Mt 24:32-34

What’s He saying there? He’s saying that there are things that are going to be happening, I’m telling you a bunch of signs, that when you see things – you know that my coming is near. The season is near. Now verse 34 has caused people to conclude that Jesus lied – because the disciples died and that stuff didn’t happen – OR they argue that

everything He talked about culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and therefore this is all completely historical – but **if we look** carefully at what Jesus ACTUALLY said – that would be incorrect. Jesus said that **this generation** – well what generation? The one that’s alive right then? No – He’s saying that the generation who sees ALL these things take place will not pass away. Not some of these signs, not most of these signs – ALL of them. We won’t know the exact time – but we’ll know the general time, the season – Earlier Jesus was talking with the Pharisees and the Sadducees and they wanted Him to prove He was the Messiah by performing a sign – and Jesus **says to them** – “**When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’** <sup>3</sup> **And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.** <sup>4</sup> **An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So, he left them and departed.”** You’ve all heard the old adage “Red sky morning sailors warning, red sky at night, sailors delight”. That’s been known since biblical times – and Jesus was saying to these Bible scholars – these people who should have recognized all of the prophecies that Jesus was fulfilling – and they should have known that He WAS the Messiah – but they didn’t – because the Prophets had foretold all of these details about Him and Jesus fulfilled every single one – and so He ends with a cryptic saying – and that’s the sign of Jonah – which was a metaphor for Jesus spending three days in the grave and then re-emerging – Jesus was going to die and be resurrected – and He was – and that was the final sign – but yet – they still didn’t believe even after that – and in 70AD their world came to an end – life as they knew it came to an end. And that wasn’t the only time Jesus rebuked people for not knowing or understanding the signs of the times – in Luke **12:54-56** Jesus says “<sup>54</sup> **He also said to the crowds, ‘When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens.** <sup>55</sup> **And when you see the south wind**

**blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens.**

**56** **You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”** When it comes to Jesus’ second coming – we don’t want to make the same mistake – we want to recognize these signs that He and others in the Bible have told us – and be ready. Because we can and should know the approximate time – we can know the season – just like red sky in the morning or evening – just like when the leaves change color up here – just like in another month or two the trees outside start putting out buds – we should be looking for and understanding these signs – but we won’t know **exactly when**.

Jesus said **“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.”** (Mt 24:36; Mk 13:31-37) Now of course when Jesus said that He was still walking on this earth in His humanity. This was a day or two before His crucifixion. He knows now – He’s in Heaven preparing.

Paul said in his first letter to the **Thessalonians** **“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”** (1 Thess 5:1-3)

There’s a lot in that statement – but Paul is basically saying – look – I don’t even need to write down these signs because you’re going to know (although He does tell us some of what to look for – he’s saying – it’s going to be obvious) But You are fully aware that Jesus is going to come like a thief in the night.

In **Rev 3:3** Jesus tells the church at Sardis **“3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will**

come against you.” In **Revelation 16:15** Jesus says “**Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!**”

Now that doesn't mean Jesus is coming at night – it means Jesus is coming when you don't expect Him to – He could come ANYTIME – so be watchful – be ready. The thing with Bible prophecy is – some people get WAY too worked up over it to the point where they obsess over it – and that's wrong – and then some go the other direction and become complacent and non-shallot which is exactly **what Peter told us** would happen – “<sup>3</sup> **First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.**”<sup>4</sup> They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” (2 Peter 3:3-4 NIV). Yah Yah – every generation thinks they are the generation that Jesus will return – and it's been over 2000 years and it hasn't happened... Anyone heard that one?

(Back to **1 Thess 5:3**) While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.” They get complacent, they become callous (or hard hearted), they become apathetic. We need to keep watch.

Right after Jesus tells us we won't know the day or the hour He continues and expounds on what He was saying – **He says** “<sup>37</sup> **For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.**”<sup>38</sup> **For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,**<sup>39</sup> **and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”**

Well – that's a pregnant statement – so to speak – What was it like in the Days of Noah? Well first of all there was so much sin and evil in the world that God decided to destroy almost all life and start over. And He

tells Noah to start building this massive ship on dry land on a world where it had never rained – back then plants were watered by a mist and the dew. And so there is this sign to the people – and it’s not stated in the Bible, but we can imagine that some people might have asked Noah as they mocked him – what are you doing? And I’m sure Noah told them – and they laughed at him and continued to mock him – you’re crazy old man – rain? Flood? What are you talking about. And Noah might have said – God isn’t pleased with your sin and your behavior – Yah – okay – sure – Repent – turn back to God – expletives – and while these scoffers are living their lives like nothing’s going on – getting married, having babies, eating, drinking, partying, watching sports, playing video games – Noah and his family - they gathered all the animals they were told to gather and they all go into the ark – **Genesis 7:1-5** says **“Then the Lord said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. <sup>2</sup> Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, <sup>3</sup> and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. <sup>4</sup> For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.” <sup>5</sup> And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.”**

Now there’s something significant in that passage that I’m going to come back to when I talk about the rapture that I just discovered and I’ve never seen anyone talk about this before – so it’s pretty cool - but Noah goes into the ark and that’s the final sign for the people – and a week later total destruction came. The people were warned. And people will be mocking those who proclaim Christ’s return. People will be living in great sin which we’ll get to next week, They’ll be just living their lives, and they will be completely unaware until it’s too late.

**That's all the time** we have for today - So next week we are going to be talking about some of these signs that Jesus, Peter and Paul talk about that will tell us like a red sky or like leaves on the tree – how we will know that Jesus return is near. Any Questions?