

End Times – Lesson Two

Last week we had our introduction to this Bible Study on end times and I told you that because of how I thought the Chronological Life of Jesus study was so eye opening – how you could really see how things flowed in a way that is different if you just read your Bible the way it's presented – that I would like to do the same thing with this study – to the best of my ability – because obviously there are unknowns here – and I gave the little theology lesson that I always give whenever I am presenting material that could be controversial – We talked about Dogma, Doctrine and Opinion – and I'll remind you again of the quote from James Macdonald although he may actually be quoting someone as well – I'm not sure – but in the Majors conviction, in the minors tolerance, Love in all things – and because much of what we are going to be talking about in this study falls into the opinion category – we have to be open to the idea that something I teach you could be wrong – okay – but I believe I am going to be able to present to you a very convincing argument based on evidence and pretty solid hermeneutics (or Bible interpretation).

And so after the introduction, most of what I talked about was the timing of Jesus return and it boils down to two things – 1) We don't know the day or the hour but we can know the season and we should be able to recognize it – Jesus actually criticized the Scribes and the Pharisees, the Bible scholars of the day for NOT recognizing the signs that He was, in fact, the Messiah – they can read the signs in nature and know what the weather is going to be but they can't seem to read the signs of the times – So we don't want to make that same mistake - and 2) Jesus is going to return when we don't expect Him but He IS going to return and so we should keep watch.

So that was last week – are there any questions before we get started on the topic for this week?

Signs of the Times

So, Today we are going to begin talking about the signs and the majority of the signs we're going to talk about are what Jesus told the disciples it would be like when He returned – we'll also look at some other passages where Peter and Paul talk about the end times as well – but let's start with Jesus. And I have to tell you – we aren't going to get very far into them today – like I said – we are really going to get into the weeds – I think it will pick up some next week – so we're looking at another week minimum before we get to the Rapture – the good news for you is – no homework again next week unless you weren't in our chronological study then you can read the passages where these signs are found

Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 17 and 21.

But, Jesus had just got done telling them that the Temple was going to be destroyed and then they ask Him – what will be the signs of the end of the age and of your coming?

And this is how Jesus responds –

Mt 24:4 -5 See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray (see also Mk 13:6; Lk 21:8)

Matthew 24:23–24

23 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. (Also Mk 13:21-22)

Matthew 24:11

And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.

Luke 21:8

And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them.

Acts 20:27–30

27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

2 Corinthians 11:12–15

12 And what I am doing I will continue to do, in order to undermine the claim of those who would like to claim that in their boasted mission they work on the same terms as we do. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

Revelation 2:2

“ ‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

1 Tim 4:1-2

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,

So the first thing Jesus tells us is that there will be false Christ's, false prophets and Paul and Jesus both tell us about false apostles.

Now – this has been going on since the days of the disciples – and it's still going on today – of course with the internet and television, books and so on, it's much easier to see and recognize these things.

Here are some examples of people who have claimed to be the Messiah and these are, I believe all in our lifetimes

- Sergey Anatolyevitch Torop
- Mitsuo Matayoshi
- Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez
- Alan John Miller
- Inri Cristo
- Wayne Bent
- Jesus of Kitwe
- José Luis de Jesús Miranda
- Vissarion
- Apollo Quiboloy
- Mose Hlongwane
- Ahn Sahng-Hong
- David Shayler
- David Koresh
- Sun Myung Moon
- Marshall Applewhite
- Jim Jones

2 Corinthians 11:3-4 says “3 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.”

Who preaches a different Jesus than what our New Testament preaches? Mormon's, Jehovah's Witnesses, Islam.

Then there are false prophets – some of which are simply false teachers – and they will lead people astray like 1 Tim 4:1-2 talked about – and some of them aren't even trying to disguise themselves as religious leaders –

Oprah would be a good example – she has led many, many people astray – pointing them to false teachers like Rhonda Byrne known for her book *The Secret* and Eckhart Tolle – *A New Earth*.

1. *The Secret*: There are spiritual realities that govern the universe and they are as real as the physical laws we all live with.
2. The forces that control the universe are impersonal and detached.
3. Anyone, anywhere can reach out to the universe and it will respond.
4. *The Secret* - Your thoughts, good or bad, create your life.
5. Making your life work is all up to you.

In other words – it doesn't matter if a tornado rips through a town of 50,000 destroying all you've ever known and taking your whole family with it – just reach out to the collective consciousness of the universe, think happy thoughts and you'll be fine. This is typical new age garbage if you're not sure about this one – see me after the service and we'll talk.

A New Earth: But here are just a few quotes from the book and I'm not going to refute them all because we'll be here all day and I still have other things we need to cover. I'll just read these quotes off and you see how many red flags and alarms go off in your heart.

Every belief is an obstacle

All religions are equally false and equally true, depending on how you use them. If you believe only your religion is the truth , you are using it in the service of the ego

If you go deep enough into your religion, then you all get to the same place.

You are all one with all that is. (Sound familiar?)

There is no separation between you and God. Between you and the source of life. (Yes there is – it's called sin).

The misuse of the word God by people who don't know what they're talking about gives rise to absurd beliefs, assertions and egoic delusions, such as 'My or our God is the only true God, and your God is false.'

Man made God in his own image. The eternal, the infinite, and unnamable was reduced to a mental idol that you had to believe in and worship as 'my god' or 'our god'.

The second coming of Christ is a transformation of human consciousness, a shift from time to presence, from thinking to pure consciousness, not the arrival of some man or woman.

Tolle's definition of sin - to miss the point of human existence.

Evil has a relative, not an absolute reality. In other words - there is no real evil, there is no real bad, there is no real wrong. (Moral Relativism)

Guilt is a favorite thing for the ego to hang on to. What guilt says is "I did bad - that was me, my mistake" The truth is, it was a manifestation of human unconsciousness. (Hey don't worry about robbing that bank or killing that guy – it was just a manifestation of your human unconsciousness.)

There is only one perpetrator of evil on the planet: human unconsciousness (yep – let's direct our attention away from the man behind the curtain – Satan)

In Hindu teachings, and sometimes Buddhism also, this transformation of human consciousness is called enlightenment. In the teachings of Jesus, it is salvation.

How many of you heard some things that you said – there are some things here that really contradict God’s Word? How many of you said – I know something isn’t right but I just can’t put my finger on it? How many of you thought “There’s absolutely nothing wrong with what this guy is teaching?” You know – I wouldn’t have spent nearly as much time on this one except listen to what some “Professing Christians” posted on Oprah.com

"I have been a Christian for many years, and after much searching, prayer and meditation, I have found that the teachings and writings of Eckhart Tolle are in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ."

"I haven't found anything in Tolle's book that goes against my Christian faith. If anything, it is helping me understand better."

"I could not have said it better myself, this book does not threaten my Christian beliefs but only enhances them."

Scary isn't it

But then there are religious leaders who are teaching heresy or not teaching the Bible at all

That would include pretty much anyone who puts themselves under the banner of progressive Christianity or the Emergent Church – People like Brian McLaren, Rob Bell – really most of the names you probably wouldn’t recognize so instead – let me give you some examples of what they teach – 1. They have a lowered view of the Bible – So they tend to abandon terms like that Bible is the inspired and authoritative word of God. You might here them say something like “The Bible is a human book” “I disagree with the apostle Paul on that issue” “The Bible condones immorality, so we are obligated to reject what it says in certain

places.” “The Bible ‘contains’ the word of God.” 2) Feelings are emphasized over facts - personal experiences, feelings, and opinions tend to be valued above objective truth. As the Bible ceases to be viewed as God’s definitive word, what a person feels to be true becomes the ultimate authority for faith and practice. Comments you might hear: “That Bible verse doesn't resonate with me....” “I thought homosexuality was a sin until I met and befriended some gay people....” “I just can’t believe Jesus would send good people to hell....” 3) Essential Christian Dogma and doctrines are open for re-interpretation. So you might hear them say or teach something like “The resurrection of Jesus doesn't have to be factual to speak truth....” “The church's historic position on sexuality is archaic and needs to be updated within a modern framework...” “The idea of a literal hell is offensive to non-Christians and needs to be re-interpreted....” In fact Rob Bell teaches that there is no hell and instead those who are not saved are annihilated. 4) Historic terms are re-defines (and we are seeing that more than ever today – even outside of religion) There are some Progressive Christians who say they affirm doctrines like biblical inspiration, inerrancy, and authority, but they have to do linguistic gymnastics to make those words mean what they want them to mean. Like divine inspiration of the Bible can mean – in the same way and on the same level that many other Christian books, songs and sermons are “inspired”. Now does the Holy Spirit guide me on how to write my sermons – yes – but is it at the same level as the Bible? No – absolutely not. Another word that tends to get a Progressive make-over is the word "love." When plucked out of its biblical context, it becomes a catch-all term for everything non-confrontative, pleasant, and affirming. So some of the comments you might hear are “God wouldn't punish sinners—He is love....” “Sure, the Bible is authoritative—but we've misunderstood it for the first 2,000 years of church history...” “It's not our job to talk to anyone about sin—it's our job to just love them....” and let me just distinguish that from what I say – okay – when it comes to non-Christians it is not our job to judge them

– but we are to love them – when it comes to Christians, people who claim to be Christians or when we are making general statements – then we absolutely address sin. 5) The heart of the gospel message shifts from sin and redemption to social justice - There is no doubt that the Bible commands us to take care of the unfortunate and defend those who are oppressed. This is a very real and profoundly important part of what it means to live out our Christian faith. However, the core message of Christianity—the gospel—is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and resurrected, and thereby reconciled us to God. This is the message that will truly bring freedom to the oppressed.

Many Progressive Christians today find the concept of God willing His Son to die on the cross to be embarrassing or even appalling. Sometimes referred to as "cosmic child abuse," the idea of blood atonement is de-emphasized or denied altogether, with social justice and good works enthroned in its place. So you might hear them say things like “Sin doesn't separate us from God—we are made in His image and He called us good...” “God didn't actually require a sacrifice for our sins—the first Christians picked up on the pagan practice of animal sacrifice and told the Jesus story in similar terms...” “We don't really need to preach the gospel—we just need to show love by bringing justice to the oppressed and provision to the needy...”

So you really have to pay attention when your reading a book or watching a Christian television show to what are they teaching.

Here are some other examples of False prophets – Those that preach the prosperity Gospel (TD Jakes, Crefalo Dollar, and the guy I’m going to spend a little more time on today – “Joel Osteen”

Joel Osteen is pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston Texas – it’s the largest church in the United States. He has the most watched religious

television show in the world with over 7 million viewers and his ministry brings in over 80 million dollars a year and that doesn't count his personal book sales. And I want to preface this portion of the message with this – I used to watch and listen to Joel – I use to get his devotional in my email – but I noticed some things which raised some red flags and caused me to investigate further. Some of you might watch or listen to Joel and some of you might Love Joel and be angry with me for “picking” on him. Until I really looked into it I thought that others were being unfair and picking on Joel too. Sometimes Joel does have some good messages – but there are some major problems with Joel's theology. So all I'm asking you to do is to listen to what I have to say, look into it for yourself and make your own decision because I'm not going to apologize for this.

Romans 16:17-18 says "¹⁷ **I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.** ¹⁸ **For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.**

So what's so bad about Joel and others like him? Well at Lakewood church there are no crosses – inside or out – no religious symbols at all actually. Joel himself said to one interviewer on 60 minutes that he actually thinks of himself more as a motivational speaker than a preacher. All of his messages are meant to be uplifting and encouraging – now there's nothing wrong with being encouraging and uplifting – we need that – Joel says he doesn't preach anything else because he “doesn't want to beat people up with a baseball bat – they know they've done wrong.” He doesn't preach on sin, hell or salvation. Loved ones – we have to preach the whole Bible – the good, the bad and the ugly. Sometimes we need the baseball bat. You need to know that just because you become a Christian tragedy won't strike your life. God never promises that – as a matter of fact – God tells us we will run into

problems - I'll give Joel some credit – he doesn't teach that we won't face tough times – but many of them do. The problem is – that Joel only preaches that God wants to you to have phenomenal health, phenomenal relationships, and phenomenal wealth and the rest of his theology which he never preaches about is severely flawed. There's a difference between God's providential will – what will happen and God's revealed will – how God would like us to live according to the Bible and we also have to understand that we have free will – which means we can and will mess it up and the Bible NEVER says that just because we ask God is going to cure us of a disease, or make us materially rich. We can be spiritually rich, but it never says God wants us to be materially rich. Sometimes God's answer to those prayers is “No”, sometimes it's “Not yet” and sometimes – sometimes it's “Yes”.

This is from Osteen's interview on 60 minutes. When asked about his book "Become a better you"

Interviewer: "To become a better you - you must - become positive towards yourself, develop better relationships, embrace the place where you are. - not one mention of God in that, not one mention of Jesus Christ in that"

Osteen: "That's just my message - There is Scripture in there that backs it all up, but I feel like I'm called to help people - how do we walk out the Christian life, how do we live it, and these are principals that can help you - I mean , there's a lot better people qualified to say 'Here's a book that will explain the Scriptures to ya" - I don't think that' s my gifting."

My response – if you're going to stand in front of people, be it 20 or millions and claim to represent God – you had better be able to understand and explain His Word. 2 Timothy 4:2-4 says "**Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.** ³ For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine.

Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths." It gets worse – Here's an interview from Larry King Live. A caller confronts Joel about sidestepping King's question about who is saved and who isn't.

Caller: "The Bible clearly tells us that Jesus is the way the truth and the life, and the only way to the Father is through Him. That's not really a message of condemnation but of truth."

Osteen: "Yah, I would agree with her. I believe that."

King: "So a Jew is not going to Heaven"

Osteen: "No, well here's my thing Larry is I can't judge somebody's heart. You know, only God can look at somebody's heart. So I don't know, to me it's not my business to say this one is or this one isn't. I just say "This is what the Bible teaches." I want to put my faith in Christ and uh I think it's wrong when we go around saying "you're not going to heaven, your not going, your not going" because that's not exactly my way.

King: "But you believe your way."

Osteen: "I believe my way, I believe my way with all my heart."

King: "So someone who doesn't share it... is wrong"

Osteen: "Well... I don't know if I look at it like that - I would present my way but - I'm just going to let God be the judge of that - I don't know - I don't know"

King: "So you make no judgment on anyone."

Osteen: "No but I"

King: "What about Atheists?"

Osteen: "Well, I just - You know what - I let someone - I let God be the judge of who goes to Heaven and Hell and I just again I present the truth and I say that every week that I believe it's a relationship with Jesus - but you know what - I'm not going to go around telling everyone else that if they don't want to believe that - that's going to be your own choice - God's gotta look at your own heart, God's gotta look at your heart. Only God knows that.

God looking at your heart is the worst fate imaginable. Because He knows what's in your heart - He knows it's full of sin and wickedness. It's by Jesus Christ that we are saved. Jeremiah 17:9 "**The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?**" and Matt 15:19 "**For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.**"

There's one more thing I want to touch on and this will transition us into this church specifically. During one message Joel preached called "Living in Total Victory" he quotes Ephesians 1:4 – it's up on the big screen and it's on the TV and he quotes it as "Long before God laid down the earth's foundation. He had us on His mind. Because of the sacrifice Christ made we are free people and not just barely free, but abundantly free." One translation says "Unquestionably free"

The problem is – that's NOT what Ephesians 1:4 says and I looked in at least a dozen translations. What Ephesians 1:4 actually says is "**For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.**" I've found a few translations that say "Long before God laid down the earth's foundation" but the entire second half of the verse is made up. That's why I always ask you to open up your Bible's and turn with me – so you can read it for yourself. And I encourage you to at least write down the citations for the other verses I quote so you can look them up later. That's why Paul said of the Bereans in Acts 17:11 "**Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great**

eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” Make sure your write that down – Acts 17:11

By the way – that’s one of the only times I’ve ever even heard him mention Jesus and he didn’t say Jesus – he used the term Christ (or Messiah).

There are plenty more – and there are some listed that I know some of you like – some of you read their books, some of you love what they have to say – and I can’t read every book you read or watch every television show you watch – so let me just say this – be careful, and match what the person is saying to scripture - do they contradict each other?

Now I will say that I’ve seen people who I like and listen to listed on some of these “false teacher lists” as well and so here’s the thing – and this goes back to our theology lesson - some people will label someone a false teacher because of something they teach in the opinion realm – they would put me on that list – because I don’t agree fully with them on a topic that’s clearly in the opinion category. So I outright dismiss those – where it’s important though is if the teaching on dogma disagrees with what Scripture teaches. That’s where we have to be really careful and compare what we are being taught to what the Bible actually says.

And well – we got one whole sign in today – and we’re out of time.

I’m happy to tell you that next week we’ll get through probably the rest of them – but this one was SO important that I really needed to get into the weeds on this. Questions?