

Thursday Evening Bible Study

Series: the End Times – Bible prophecy about future events and periods

Teaching Summary for Week 67

The Tribulation Period

Part 4. The Book of Revelation

Outline of the Book of Revelation

See **Handout** titled “**An outline of the book of Revelation: Visions, Events, and Judgments**”.

We ended last time at the event “The Fall of Babylon the Great”.

That is where we will pick things up tonight.

Timeline for the End Times

See **Handout** titled “**Suggested Timeline for the End Times**”

We are now able to put together the facts we have learned about end times chronology in a simple comprehensive timeline.

Let’s go from start to finish and read each Scripture so you see the connections. Again, please ask any questions that you have.

The Future of the Church

Overview

We have finally returned to us, today, during the Church Age. What does the Bible say about the future of the church, the body of Christ?

Quite a bit, actually. In preparing for this final installment in our series on the End Times, I reviewed 50 New Testament passages in the gospel of John and the epistles.

That's a lot of verses – many more than I would have guessed before I began my study.

These verses fall into three broad categories or periods:

1. The **trends** in these **last days of the church age** are for increasing *darkness*.
2. The **hope** for the church is *bright*: **the Rapture**.
3. The **ages to come** – the **Second Coming (and by implication, the Millennial Reign of Christ)**, and the Eternal State (**the new heavens and new earth, and the New Jerusalem**) - will be *glorious* for the church.

We are now going to look at some representative verses for each period.

1. The **trends** in these **last days of the church age** are for increasing *darkness*.

The first passage, 1 Timothy 4:1-4, describes conditions within the “church” – those who assemble and profess to be Christians. However, in later times, many of these will be unbelievers or false teachers.

1 Tim 4:1-5

*But the Spirit explicitly says that **in later times** some will **fall away** from the faith, paying attention to **deceitful spirits** and **doctrines of demons**, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 **men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods** which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; 5 for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.*

What trends are identified in this passage? When will they be occurring?

Important: with respect to the question of “when”, don’t forget that each generation of Christians eagerly anticipates the return of our Lord in the clouds.

The next passage, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13 describes conditions in the world – although these conditions also show up in the church to the extent that members act no differently than the unbelievers in the world.

2 Tim 3:1-5,13 ; 4:3-4

*But realize this, that in **the last days difficult times [seasons]** will come. 2 For **men** will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. [note carefully – what does this tell us when these men are on the scene?]*

Verse 5 was addressed to Timothy. What does this reveal about when these men will be on the scene?

This tells us that such men will be present in each generation. It is a matter of intensity, as verse 13 below brings out. In other words, things will get worse as time passes. This will come in waves (seasons). The waves will keep getting bigger and more frequent.

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13 But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

.....

In chapter 4, verses 3-4, Paul returns to describing conditions inside the church:

*4: 3 For **the time will come** when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside [be turned aside] to myths.*

What conditions are described here?

2. The **hope** for the church is *bright*: **the Rapture**.

1 Thess 1:9-10

*9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who **rescues us from the wrath to come**.*

What does 1 Thessalonians 1:10 teach us about the timing of the Rapture?

Titus 2:11-14 begins with the present age, and moves on to the blessed hope of the Rapture:

Titus 2:11-14

*11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly **in the present age**, 13 looking for **the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*

3. The **ages to come** – the **Second Coming** (and by implication, the Millennial Reign of Christ), and the Eternal State (**the new heavens and new earth, and the New Jerusalem**) - will be *glorious* for the church.

Eph 2:4-7

*4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that **in the ages to come** He might show the **surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.***

The ages to come are the periods after the Church Age ends (ie, after the Rapture).

What does Ephesians 2:7 tell us about the church in the ages to come?

What does this suggest about the timing of the Rapture relative to Daniel's 70th week. Consider that Daniel's 70th week is one of the ages to come.

2 Thess 1:5-2:2

*5 This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of **the kingdom of God**, for which indeed you are suffering. 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well **when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 **when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day**, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to **you** was believed. 11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Which kingdom is in view in verse 5?

In the above passage, 2Thessalonians 1:5-12, Paul describes the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we know?

This description matches what is said about the Second Coming by the prophets, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the book of Revelation. But we have a new wrinkle here.

Christ will be glorified in his saints on that day. This means that the body of Christ will be revealed in glory with Him.

The prophets don't mention the presence of the body of Christ in glorified bodies. Nor does Jesus in the gospel of Matthew, and Revelation does not include this either.

Why not?

Hint: the prophets deal with events -where?

On earth!

The body of Christ is a heavenly people. (Colossians 3:1-4; Philippians 3:20-21).

We will be present with Him as His body. We will always be with Him after we are raptured. But we are not involved with the things on earth, other than being revealed with Him as His body. His angels descend to earth with Him in flaming fire, when the Lord deals out retribution to unbelievers.

We will see other passages that also speak about our appearing with Him in glory at that time.

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 1, Paul speaks about a different coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. What is this? How do we know?

*2:1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to **the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him**, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*

What does this passage teach us about the future things for the church?

Next time, we will study each period in more depth, going to additional passages in the New Testament.

Keep in mind that we are looking at each of them from the perspective of the church.

This will be important when we consider #3, the ages to come. We have already studied these ages to come, but it was from the perspective of Israel and the Gentile nations.