

Thursday Evening Bible Study

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

**Teaching Summary for Week 68**

## **The Tribulation Period**

### **Part 4. The Book of Revelation**

#### **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.

The passages that describe the future of the church are quite general, not specific.

They lack details about :

- Chronology (no verses give us the timing of the Rapture , for example)
- Location (where we are when the Second Coming occurs)
- Events (Are all the passages about the judgment of believers talking about the same event?)

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 examine various Scriptures for each of these categories.

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 about 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.

.....

*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?

The conditions inside the church include:

- Believers will not endure sound doctrine
- Instead, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires
- As a result, they will turn their ears away from the truth, and they will be turned aside to myths.
- Some will fall away from the faith
- Instead, they will pay attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons
- They will fall for the hypocrisy of liars who will be seared in their own consciences
- These false teachers will forbid marriage and will advocate abstaining from foods

Here are some additional scriptures that describe conditions outside the church in the last days/hour.

*1 John 2:18*

*18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.*

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*Jude 17-19*

*17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, 18 that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." 19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.*

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At the same time ,we groan inside waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons – the redemption of our body at the Rapture.

*Rom 8:18-25*

*18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.*

This present age is evil, but the Lord will rescue us out of it.

*Gal 1:3-5*

*3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.*

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“This present evil age” refers to the world, not to the church. Satan is the ruler of this world. He has blinded the minds of the unbelievers.

*2 Cor 4:3-4*

*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

*Rom 13:11-14*

*11 Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. 12 **The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.** 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*

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.*