

 Truth Seekers Fellowship

SUMMER BIBLE STUDY 2008



“... we know the time,
that it is already the hour
for us to awake from sleep,
*for our salvation is now nearer
than when we first believed.*

The night has advanced toward dawn;

the day is near.

So then we must lay aside
the works of darkness,
and put on the weapons of light.”

| Romans 13:11-12 |

Make Your Journey Worthy of Your Destination

To connect with us, call or write:

Truth Seekers Fellowship

5390-1 Estate Office Drive

Memphis, TN 38119

or

PO Box 17931

Memphis, TN 3817-0931

Tel: 901/866.685.3385

Fax: 901.685.1291

email: connect@tsfmemphis.org

You can also visit us on the web at: www.tsfmemphis.org

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We proclaim
CHRIST
*by warning and **teaching** all people*
*with all **wisdom***
so that we may present every person
***mature** in Christ.*

*Toward this goal we **labor**,*
struggling** according to His **power
that powerfully works in us.

| COLOSSIANS 1:28-29 |

1 ARE WE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS?

What?/ There is a lot of confusion these days over what the Bible actually says about the end of this present era/age and beginning of the next. In this first session, we are going to consider some key passages that help us know when the Last Days begin/began and how this teaching fits in the larger biblical narrative. **Why?/** There are many different views on the events preceding and following the return of the Lord. This often brings confusion, doubt and worry. God, however, has revealed significant parts of His future plans to us so that we may have hope. **How?/** In order to understand our place in the times in which we live, we must carefully read and search the Scriptures to see what they reveal about the Last Days, the End Times and the end of this Present Age. **What the Bible does reveal encourages our faith, not our fear.**

1.1 WHAT Does the Bible Reveal about the beginning of the Last Days?

1.1.1 The “Last Days” were inaugurated with the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus:

The following quote is given the context of the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit has been poured out on the disciples and they have been proclaiming the good news of the Gospel to the diaspora Jews who were gathered in Jerusalem for the festival. The crowd wonders how the miraculous events can be taking place. Peter gives the explanation that it is the fulfillment of prophecy.

Acts 2:14-18 But Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice, and addressed them: “You men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, know this and listen carefully to what I say. 15 In spite of what you think, these men are not drunk, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16 *But this is what was spoken about through the prophet Joel:* 17 ‘**And in the last days** it will be,’ God says, ‘that I will pour out my Spirit on all people,...

Hebrews 1:1-4 After God spoke long ago in various portions and in various ways to our ancestors through the prophets, 2 *in these last days* he has spoken to us in a son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world.

1 Peter 1:17-20 And if you address as Father the one who impartially judges according to each one’s work, *live out the time of your temporary*

residence here in reverence. 18 You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors you were ransomed - not by perishable things like silver or gold, 19 but by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, namely Christ. 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world ***but was manifested in these last times for your sake.***

1.1.2 Although we are in the “Last Days,” the final events of the End Times are yet to happen.

1. The Rebellion
2. The Rise of Antichrist
3. The Redemption of Israel
4. The “Rapture”
5. The Great Suffering (Daniel’s 70th Seven and The Great Tribulation)
6. The Return of Jesus
7. The Establishment of the Eternal Kingdom

1.2 WHAT is Eschatology? And Why is it important?

1.3 WHAT are the three main views on Eschatology?

» *Postmillennialism*

» *Amillennialism*

» *Premillennialism*

1.4 WHAT things do conservatives tend to agree on?

» *This present age - with its sin, death and corruption - will be brought to an end.*

» *Jesus will return to set things right.*

- » ***No matter what, Jesus will rapture/rescue/protect His people from the Future wrath of God. Believers will be spared the horrors of God's Wrath in the Great Tribulation.***

1.5 WHY is it important to know these things?

- » ***In our times, there is so much deception and subtle scheming by false teachers we must be all the more diligent to know and live in line with the truth.***
- » ***We are living in one of the most Biblically illiterate and ignorant societies in history. It is also one of the most hopeless. This gives us great opportunity as disciples of Jesus.***

1.6 HOW do we then live in light of The END?

The study of the last days is only a part of developing a larger view of the reality of His-story - the Larger Story in which we live. Knowing where we have come (Origin) and where we are heading (Destiny) are critical in establishing a **hopeful** view of our present situation. The Larger Story of the Bible is one that is meant to give us hope; this hope is the foundation of our faith (cf. Colossians 1:3-6)

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through *endurance* and through *encouragement* of the scriptures ***we may have hope.***

2 Peter 3:10-18 ... But *the Day of the Lord* will come like a thief; when it comes, the heavens will disappear with a horrific noise, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze, and the earth and every deed done on it will be laid bare.

11 Since all these things are to melt away in this manner, ***what sort of people must we be, conducting our lives in holiness and godliness, 12 while waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God?*** Because of this day, the heavens will be burned up and dissolve, and the celestial bodies will melt away in a blaze! 13 But, according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides.

14 Therefore, dear friends, ***since you are waiting for these things, strive to be found at peace, without spot or blemish, when you come into his presence.*** 15 ***And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation,*** just as also our dear brother Paul wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him, 16 speaking of these things in all his letters. Some things in these letters are hard to understand, things the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they also do to the rest of the scriptures. 17 Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, ***be on your***

guard that you do not get led astray by the error of these unprincipled men and fall from your firm grasp on the truth. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the honor both now and on that eternal day.

Preparing for Next Week:

READ Matthew 24:1-51; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-38; 1 and 2 Thessalonians. **OBSERVE** what is similar in all of these texts. **OBSERVE** what is different. **CONSIDER** what these texts emphasize as most significant and important.

1.7 APPENDIX Lesson 1

Eschatology, or the study of the last things, is probably the most *complicated* and *controversial* topic in Christian theology. It is complicated for at least two reasons:

1. The question of “how will it all end” is a question that is answered by the Bible as a whole and not just individual books or passages. Thus dealing with this question *requires knowledge and understanding of the whole Bible* not just its parts.
2. In the New Testament there are several places where passages seem to be speaking about the same events but from *different perspectives* and with *different levels of detail*. How does Jesus’ teaching on the End in Matthew 24 fit with the later revelation given to Paul in 1 and 2 Thessalonians or John in Revelation? Looking at these texts closely reveals that by themselves these texts do not give us a comprehensive picture of the End. **So how do they all fit together?**
3. Given all the facts, there are some issues within eschatology that teachers and theologians should humbly confess, “I just don’t know...” rather than take a dogmatic and unmovable position. If a dogmatic position is taken on some of the more problematic topics of eschatology then the whole system can be made overly rigid and complicated or too simplistic. We should always remember that ***prophecy is not 100% clear until it is fulfilled***. We can know how things will turn out in terms of the “Big Picture” but we must be careful when pressing the details beyond what is clearly revealed in Scripture.

The study of eschatology is also *controversial* for at least three reasons:

1. At this point in history a lot of theological water has passed under the bridge, so to speak. ***Denominational traditions*** have adopted prescribed teachings on eschatology that are simply passed down and accepted without much critical evaluation.
2. Because of the first issue, the theologian’s biases and presuppositions shape the outcome of his or her study. Thus, ***we often only see what we are***

told to see by the traditions to which we belong.

3. Because it is often more important for a theologian to be “right” rather than be *humble*, there has been too much “fighting amongst ourselves” and little exercise of grace by those who hold opposing views.

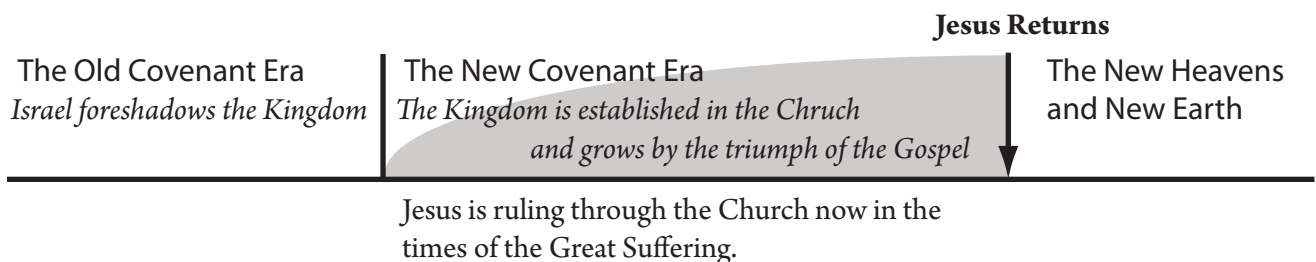
1.7.1 What 7 key questions are debated?

- ?1. Is there a place in God’s future plans for national, ethnic Israel?
- ?2. What is the relationship of Israel to the Church?
- ?3. What marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation?
- ?4. When does the “Final Future Wrath of God” begin?
- ?5. Will the church be “raptured” before the End?
- ?6. Is the “Tribulation” a seven year period or a 3 1/2 year period?
- ?7. Will Jesus rule physically on this present Earth?

1.7.2 What is the shape of the different Millennial views?

The following two views take the “1000 years” referred to in Revelation 20 as a completely figurative period of time. They also interpret this 1000 year reign of Christ as the present church age. In this study, we will be presenting a pre-millennial view which is represented by the chart on the next page.

» *Postmillennialism*



» *Amillennialism*

