PROHETIC VISION
FOR THE END TIMES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Living in the End Times</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 An Overview of the End Times</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The Great Day of the Lord</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The Terrible Day of the Lord</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 The Second Coming</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Understanding the Rapture</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Understanding the Millennial Kingdom</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Israel in the End Times</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 A Worthy Bride for Jesus</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 The Overcoming Sons of God</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Eternal Rewards</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Making Ourselves Ready</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer Sheets</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome to Lifeschool International’s Prophetic Vision for the End times class. This exciting and challenging class will help you gain valuable insight into the end times and the generation in which we live. Undoubtedly, by understanding the unique dynamics of the end times, you will be exhorted to live a more dedicated, consecrated, and passionate life for Jesus. You will be challenged to make your life count today—and for all eternity.

I have spent over ten years diligently studying the end times. In addition to the prophetic Scriptures, I have read many books on this subject, mined through tedious commentaries for nuggets of gold, spent countless hours meditating on complex end-time issues, and have often asked the Lord for deeper insight and greater clarity of end-time subjects. I don’t say that in anyway to boast—only to demonstrate that I have prayed through and thought carefully about the contents in this study guide. However, I don’t claim to have all the answers. I am not dogmatic in my beliefs. I want to be and hope I am flexible enough in my end-time theology to revise any portion of this material if the Holy Spirit gave me greater insight.

I am devoting a large part of my ministry to gaining greater insight into the end times so that I can give understanding to many (Dan. 11:33). I am searching for the truth. I am hungry for greater knowledge of the events that will take place in the generation that the Lord returns. And because we live in an hour when many new truths are being unsealed (Dan. 12:8-9), all of us need a flexible “wineskin” that can contain the “new wine” of end-time understanding that the Holy Spirit is giving in this hour. The day of dogmatic debates and inflexible opinions is over. We need the truth about the end times deep in our hearts so that we can be prepared for the most exciting and challenging time in human history. The Bible is clear that “in the latter days” we can “understand...perfectly” the end times (Jer. 23:20, NKJV). What our fathers saw dimly we can see clearly. That is why, though we respect our fathers in the faith, we can’t hold onto traditional end-time views unless they are clearly taught in the Bible.

With this class and study guide, I encourage you to be like the believers at Berea who were “noble-minded”, “received the word with great eagerness,” and who “examin[ed] the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Please don’t automatically accept what I say as absolute truth without examining it thoroughly in the Scriptures. At the same time, please don’t reject what I teach in this class just because your favorite teacher or pastor taught something that was contrary to these teachings. Examine everything carefully and hold fast to what is good (1 Thess. 5:21). All of us need to learn how to eat the meat and throw away the bones.
I also want to thank the people who helped shape my end-time views and who helped make this study guide possible. First, I want to thank my dad, Ken Kessler, for being a father in the faith and for giving great suggestions that made this study guide better. His counsel was invaluable. Second, I want to thank Noel Mann, pastor of Zion Christian Ministries in Queensland, Australia, another father in the faith, whose teachings helped shape many of my end-time views. Finally, I want to thank Mike Bickel, leader of International House of Prayer, for his extensive documentation of the end times. His free notes, available at www.ihop.org, helped clarify many complex end-time subjects and made this study guide easier to write.

May God richly bless you as you study this material and apply it your life!

Bryan Kessler
Session 1

Living in the End Times

This session covers:

- The need to understand the end times in our generation
- The purpose and structure of this class
- Why we need to understand the end times

This session corresponds to:

- Session 1 of Prophetic Vision for the End Times CDs

Understanding the End Times

1. We need to understand the times in which we live.

- We live in one of the most exciting generations in all of recorded history—a time in which God is moving powerfully throughout the earth.
- Since Israel became a nation in 1948, we have witnessed dramatic fulfillments of prophecy.
- God is restoring the Church and preparing her for the greatest move of the Spirit ever. The global worship and prayer movement is progressing. The harvest is increasing. God’s power is being restored to the Church. The Holy Spirit is preparing the Body of Christ for the most exciting and dramatic time in history.
- Right now, the stage is being set for the Lord’s return. That is why, more than ever, the Church needs to understand the times and seasons in which we live. We need to be like the sons of Issachar—“men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do” (1 Chron. 12:32).
- The Lord expects us to understand the times and seasons of His work in the earth. On several occasions, the Lord rebuked the religious community be-
cause they did not “discern the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:3). The Lord also warned Israel that they would be leveled to the ground by their enemies because they “did not recognize the time of [their] visitation” (Luke 19:44).

- Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica that the second coming of Jesus will come as a thief in the night to the world but not to those who understand the times (1 Thess. 5:2-4).
- From these Scriptures, we see that understanding the times is imperative—especially as we look at what has happened over the last sixty years.

2. **Because the Lord’s return is near, understanding the end times is critical.**

- Though many generations believed they would witness the second coming of Christ, this was impossible because certain prophecies had to be fulfilled.
- That all changed when Israel became a nation in 1948, the Jews began returning to the Promised Land, and Jerusalem once again became the capital city of Israel in 1967.
- Not since the first coming of Jesus have so many prophetic events taken place in such a short period of time.
- And yet we are only at the beginning of the end. That is why we, as the Body of Christ, must understand what the Bible says will take place in the end times.
- The New Testament speaks frequently about the events surrounding the return of Jesus. In fact, the Bible speaks more to the generation that will be alive when He returns than to any other.
- The end times will be dramatic, challenging, exhilarating, and terrible—all at the same time. It will be the best of times and the worst of times.
- Never before has the Church needed a proper understanding of the end of the age like it does today.

3. **We need a fresh vision of the end times.**

- When Jesus told the Laodicean Church to “buy...eye salve...that you may see,” He was attempting to correct their nearsighted vision (Rev. 3:18). Because the Laodicean Church was more concerned about the here and now, their vision became blurry, and subsequently, their love for God grew lukewarm.
- Jesus’ exhortation to the Laodicean Church is extremely relevant to the twenty-first century Church. We need our nearsighted vision corrected by receiving fresh insight into the end times.
- We desperately need a clear vision of what is just over the horizon in order to wake up, change our lifestyle, prepare for the return of the Lord, and partner with the Holy Spirit to hasten His coming.
The Structure and Purpose of This Class

1. This first part of this class has been designed to help you see the big picture of God’s end-time plan. Specifically, we will look at:
   - Why the end times are important;
   - An overview of the end times;
   - The great and the terrible Day of the Lord;
   - The second coming of Christ, the Battle of Armageddon, and the judgment of the nations;
   - The rapture of the Church;
   - The Millennial Kingdom;
   - Israel in the end times;

2. This second part of this class has been designed to help you prepare for the end times and for all eternity. Specifically, we will look at:
   - The worthy Bride of Christ;
   - The overcoming sons of God;
   - Eternal rewards;
   - How to live for eternity.

This class has been specifically designed to help you understand the end times so that you will:
   - Be prepared for what will take place;
   - Partner with God to activate end-time events and hasten the Lord’s return;
   - Be a prophetic voice that will prepare the nations for the most dramatic time in history.

Prepared for the End Times

1. Jesus taught us to know the signs of His return so that we would be prepared.
   - In Matthew 24, when Jesus taught His disciples about the end times, He listed many different signs of His coming, such as widespread deception, false Christs, wars and rumors of wars, increased lawlessness, earthquakes, and famines.
   - After listing what will happen before He returns, Jesus told the disciples a parable about a fig tree, saying, “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you
see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt. 24:32-34).

- Jesus specifically instructed them—and us—to know the signs of His return, to pay close attention to these signs, and to use these signs as an indicator of when He will return.
- Scripture teaches that we are destroyed by a lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). The Bible makes it clear that understanding the end times is not optional. It is essential for us to fulfill our destiny, especially in the times in which we live. Therefore, Jesus wants us to understand the end times so that we will know what will take place and can prepare for it. If we don't understand the end times, this ignorance could lead to our downfall. It is that serious, that important.
- We don't want to be like the Pharisees who could not “discern the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:3). We need to be like the sons of Issachar—“men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do” (1 Chron. 12:32).

2. The New Testament speaks frequently about being ready for the end times and the return of the Lord.

- When speaking about the end times, Jesus frequently used phrases like “be ready,” “be on the alert,” and “be dressed in readiness” to exhort us to be prepared for the last days (Matt. 24:42-44, 25:10-13; Mark 13:35, 37; Luke 12:37-40, 21:36).
- In seeking to understand the end times, we are not interested in becoming date-setters. Rather, we want to be ready and prepared for the return of the Lord.
- The New Testament speaks frequently about being ready for the end times and the return of the Lord. In these verses, the messages are directed toward believers—not unbelievers. Notice some of these passages of Scripture:

> Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will (Matt. 24:42-44).

> And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Later the other virgins also came, saying, “Lord, lord, open up for us.” But he answered, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour (Matt. 25:10-13).

> Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men
who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect (Luke 12:35-40).

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints (Rev. 19:7-8).

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober (1 Thess. 5:4-6).

- From these Scriptures, it is clear that the most important end-time issue is not when the rapture will take place or whether the third trumpet judgment is a meteor or an asteroid. The real issue is whether or not we are ready for the end times, the Millennial Kingdom, and for all eternity.
- While many have become preoccupied with debating the timing of the rapture, who the Antichrist is, and whether credit cards are the precursor to the mark of the beast, we have overlooked the most important truth of all. Namely, are we preparing ourselves for the most dramatic time in history?
- When John was describing the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus interrupted his message to say to the churches, "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame" (Rev. 16:13-16).
- Jesus used John's description of the end times to interject a powerful message to the Church—urging us to prepare for that time by staying awake and keeping ourselves pure and undefiled.

3. Understanding the end times motivates us to seek the Lord with all of our heart and to live completely for Him.

- The Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained" (Prov. 29:18).
- The Hebrew word for "unrestrained" means "to let go, to let loose, to
ignore, to let loose restraints.”¹

- When we don’t have a vision of the future, we live undisciplined lives. Conversely, when we understand the future, especially the events that will transpire in the end times, it inspires us to live wholeheartedly for God now.

- The book of Joel highlights this principle clearly. In Joel 2:1-11, Joel painted a vivid picture of what the Day of the Lord will be like. After eleven intense and graphic verses focused on the end times, Joel prophesied, “‘Yet even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments’” (Joel 2:12-13).

- To Joel, talking about the end times was not an irrelevant or impractical subject; on the contrary, Joel knew that it motivated wholehearted living now.

- In Zephaniah 2:1-3, we see this same principle at work. Zephaniah prophesied, “Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without shame, before the decree takes effect [the Day of the Lord]—the day passes like the chaff—before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD’S anger comes upon you. Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the LORD’s anger.”

- Once again, we see that understanding the end times motivates us to seek the Lord with all of our hearts and to live completely for Him.

4. Understanding the end times inspires us to repent of whatever is entangling us, to overcome it, and to abandon ourselves to the Lord.

- Jesus’ first message in the book of Revelation, which is set in the context of the end times, is not a detailed scenario of what will happen at the end of the age. It is a wake-up call to the Church—urging each of us to get our heart right with God.

- In Revelation 2-3, Jesus addressed seven churches, exhorting each of them to overcome. He called the church at Ephesus back to their first love. He exhorted the church at Thyatira to overcome the works of Jezebel. And He chastised the church at Laodicea for being lukewarm and indifferent.

- The point is that understanding the end times motivates us to overcome whatever is entangling us so that we can live for God with all of our hearts.

- Also, as we read through other prophetic books such as Daniel, Isaiah, Joel, and Zechariah, we are motivated in a similar way to live for God wholeheartedly in light of what will transpire in the end times.

- The more clearly we understand where history is headed, the more we will abandon ourselves to God and make Him the priority of our lives today.
5. We need to understand the end times so that we can rightly interpret the crisis instead of being offended at God.

- Describing the end times, Jesus said that “many will be offended” (Matt. 24:10).
- Notice that He did not say a few or some or only a remnant would be offended. He explicitly said that many, which could imply millions of people, would be offended in the end times.
- Why will so many people be offended in the end times? Because God’s judgments, Satan’s rage, man’s sin, and natural disasters will reach the greatest level of intensity in history.
- If we don’t know why these things are taking place then it will be very easy to become offended at God. If we don’t have insight into why God is allowing so much suffering then we could become bitter and our love could grow cold.
- We need to understand the end times so that we can rightly interpret the crisis instead of being offended at God.

6. Only by understanding the end times will we have the fortitude and perseverance to endure to the end.

- Paul described a great falling away from the faith that will take place before the Lord returns (2 Thess. 2:3).
- One of the main reasons why this will happen is because many in the Church will be unprepared for the coming crisis.
- Perhaps many believers, thinking that they will be raptured away before any trouble comes, will not be adequately prepared to handle the pressures and the persecutions of the end times.
- We need to understand the end times so that we are prepared to stand in faith and victory—being willing to lay down our lives—rather than fall away from God when the pressure and persecution comes.
- Jesus said, “The one who endures to the end, he will be saved” (Matt. 24:13). Only by understanding the end times will we have the fortitude and perseverance to endure to the end.

7. Having a vision of the end times empowers us to live disciplined, focused, purpose-driven lives that will make a difference now and forever.

- To make our life count today—and more importantly, for all eternity—we need to begin with the end in mind.
- In other words, we need to live our lives with an image, picture, or paradigm of the future—especially of the end times and eternity. This needs to be the frame of reference by which everything we do is examined.
To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of our destination. Once we have clarity on where history is headed—including our role in the unfolding drama of the end times—we can work our way back to practical, everyday life issues.

For example, in the parable of the minas in Luke 19:11-27, Jesus taught that faithfulness in money, resources, and our spiritual or natural abilities will result in a ministry assignment of ruling over cities in the Millennial Kingdom.

To the servant who made ten minas, Jesus said, “Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities” (Luke 19:17).

When you understand the Millennial Kingdom—the time when Jesus literally rules the earth for one-thousand years from Jerusalem with the faithful saints throughout history (Rev. 20:6)—then this parable will make a powerful impact in your life.

By understanding the events that surround the end times and the second coming of Christ, you will be inspired to be faithful in small things now—even when no one is looking but God. You will be motivated to sweep the church when it is dirty, to come to the prayer meetings when you don’t feel like it, and to continue seeking God through the dry times.

When you begin with the end in mind, it will give you purpose and meaning today.

Having prophetic vision of the end times inspires us to overcome everything that comes against us.

Understanding the prophetic future motivates us to faithfulness now. It empowers us to walk in purity, wisdom, passion, and discipline.

We say no to the lesser pleasures of today because we understand the prophetic future and we want to have maximum impact for all eternity.

8. Understanding the end times empowers us to be made ready for the glorious purposes that God has ordained for the Church now and in eternity.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus said, “I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds [keeps] the words of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:7).

In other words, Jesus says that if you obey the prophetic exhortations contained in the book of Revelation you will be blessed.

What are some of these blessings? The greatest blessings are to be married to Jesus for all eternity as His worthy Bride and to be an overcoming son of God that qualifies for the full eternal inheritance (Rev. 19:7; Rev. 21:7).

To be blessed in such a way, we must obey the specific exhortations contained in the book of Revelation. Before we can obey the commands in this prophecy, however, we have to read it and study it so that we know it. This is precisely what John had in mind when he wrote, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed [keep] the things which are written in it; for the
time is near” (Rev. 1:3).

- To be blessed, we have to read the book of Revelation (and other end-
time Scriptures), listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church
through these writings, and then obey what is written.
- By understanding the end times and preparing accordingly, we will
position ourselves to be ready for the glorious things that God has or-
dained for the Church now and in eternity.

Partnering with God in the End Times

1. We need to understand the end times because we are called to part-
tner with God in end-time events.

- We are not called to be spectators in the end times, but participators.
- Daniel is a great example of one who partnered with God in his gen-
eration because of his understanding of the prophetic Scriptures.
- Because Daniel studied and understood Jeremiah’s prophecy (Dan.
9:2-3), he was inspired to pray for Israel’s restoration until he experi-
enced “extreme weariness” (Dan. 9:21).
- As a result of Daniel’s prayers based upon the prophetic Scriptures, 
God released the Jews from Babylonian captivity and sent them back 
to Israel (Ezra 1:1-4). This same principle will be true in the end 
times.
- Though many prophecy scholars do a good job describing what God is 
going to do at the end of the age, few describe how God is going to do 
it. Most prophecy scholars don’t even mention our role in activating 
prophecy through fervent prayer.
- As a result of this critical omission, most Christians assume that God 
will just fulfill His Word one day without our involvement or participa-
tion.
- This negligence, though not intentional, has created a spectator-
mentality in the Body of Christ toward the end times.
- Due to this omission, most of the Church is waiting passively on the 
Lord to return instead of preparing the way for His return through fer-
vent prayer.

2. We must understand our mission-critical role to activate many of the 
end-time events described in the Scriptures.

- Revelation 5:8 shows us that the events described in the book of 
Revelation will not be activated until heaven’s incense bowls are filled 
with our prayers.
- Revelation 8:1-6 illustrates that our prayers will release most of the 
events described in Revelation 8-11—including the kingdoms of the 
world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 
11:15).
- Revelation 18:20 teaches us that God will destroy Babylon—the reli-
gious, commercial, and political kingdom of Satan—in response to our 
judgment of this one-world empire.
Prophetic Vision for the End Times

- Joel 2:17-32 is an Old Testament example of how our prayers will activate many of the prophetic promises contained in the book of Joel, including a massive breakthrough in Israel and an unprecedented worldwide revival.
- These few passages stand in stark contrast to many end-time teachings that imply we have no role to play in the last days. Much of the book of Revelation, along with many other ancient prophecies, will not just take place in God’s sovereignty. We have a critical function, an indispensable role to fulfill before Jesus returns.
- God wants us to be participators in end-time events, not spectators. To partner with God in the end times, we have to understand the end times. This only happens as we diligently study books like Revelation, Daniel, Joel, Isaiah, Zechariah, and Ezekiel.

3. We are called to hasten the Lord’s return.

- Peter wrote about our participation in end-time events when he exhorted us to be “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God” (2 Peter 3:12).
- The Greek word for hastening in this passage is *speudo*. It means to speed, urge on diligently, or urge on earnestly.\(^2\)
- Hastening an event causes it to come faster than normal.
- The NIV translates this passage as “look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”
- The Living Bible says it this way: “You should look forward to that day and hurry it along.”
- Though it is hard to imagine, we can accelerate the Lord’s second coming. Our actions can put end-time events in motion and hasten the day when Jesus returns.
- This implies that the Church must do certain things before Jesus returns.
- Some of the ways that we can partner with God in the end times and hasten the Lord’s return are to:
  - Make ourselves ready as the Bride of Christ and encourage others to make themselves ready (Rev. 19:7; Luke 1:17-18);
  - Proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in the nations (Matt. 24:14);
  - Pray for Jerusalem to become a praise in the earth (Isa. 62:6-7);
  - Pray for God’s kingdom to come to the earth in fullness (Matt. 6:10; Rev. 5:8; Rev. 8:1-6; Rev. 11:15).

A Prophetic Voice to the Nations

1. We need to understand the end times so that we can be a prophetic voice that prepares the nations for the Lord’s return.

- In the context of the end times, Daniel wrote, “Those who have in-
sight among the people will give understanding to the many” (Dan. 11:33).

- The dictionary defines insight as “the ability to see and understand clearly the inner nature of things; a clear understanding of the inner nature of some specific thing.”

- As the Lord’s return draws near, the Holy Spirit will give an increased measure of revelation to those who are hungry. He will give people an ability to see and understand clearly the inner nature of how God’s prophetic plan will unfold in the end times. He will unlock the mysteries of the prophetic writings from books like Revelation, Isaiah, and Daniel.

- In fact, the angel of the Lord told Daniel that many end-time truths would be “concealed and sealed up until the end time” (Dan. 12:9).

- That means, since we now live in the end times, we can receive great insight into the events of the last days if we seek the truth diligently.

- Jeremiah prophesied, “The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart [the Lord’s end-time judgments]; in the last days you will clearly understand it” (Jer 23:20).

- To those who are hungry, God will give clear understanding of His end-time battle plans. He has promised that “in the last days” we “will clearly understand” the Lord’s prophetic blueprint.

- As a result of gaining insight into these mysteries, God will then use us to give understanding to the many.

- We need to understand the end times so that we can be a prophetic voice that gives understanding to the many through preaching, writing, small group Bible studies, or through our daily interactions with others. Why? So that the nations will be prepared for the Lord’s second coming.

2. To be a prophetic voice that prepares the nations for the Lord’s return, we have to “eat the book.”

- In Revelation 10, John is equipped to be a prophetic voice to the nations by eating the book from the angel’s hand. Notice what transpired:

  Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.” So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, “Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. And they said to me, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings” (Rev. 10:8-11).

- Though much revelation is contained in this angelic encounter, the
point we need to understand is this: John was equipped to “prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings” after he ate the book.

- Likewise, as we “eat the book” of the prophetic writings by diligently studying and obeying books such as Revelation, Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, along with the end-time teachings in the gospels and epistles, we will be equipped to prophesy to the nations.

- Revelation 19:10 states, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” True prophetic ministry testifies about the glory, the beauty, the power, and the majesty of Jesus and about what He will do as He executes the blueprint of God’s battle plan in the end times.

- To be a prophetic voice that is on the cutting-edge of what the Spirit is doing in the end times, we must read, hear, and keep what is written in the prophetic Scriptures. We must “eat the book” so that we can be a prophetic voice that prepares the nations for the glorious return of Christ.

3. In this hour of history, God is raising up prophetic voices who will prepare the way for the Lord’s second coming.

- Talking about John the Baptist, Luke 1:17 states, “It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

- At the first coming of Jesus, John the Baptist was a forerunner who prepared the way for the Messiah’s ministry. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit is raising up forerunners who will prepare the way for the Lord’s second coming.

- In essence, forerunners “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” They are prophetic voices with great insight into the end times and they give this understanding to many people so that the nations will be made ready for the Lord’s second coming.

- Forerunners are prophetic voices like John the Baptist who “clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness” and “make smooth in the desert a highway for our God” so that “the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together” (Isa. 40:3-5).

- God’s glory along with His judgments will be revealed in the end times. As a result, everything that can be shaken will be shaken. And the most sobering news is that the Church is virtually unprepared for this dramatic time in history. That is why prophetic messengers are so vital in this hour.

- To be a forerunner prophetic messenger we must take the time to understand the end times by “eating the book” so that we can prophesy to many nations and prepare the way for the Lord’s return.

To grow in our understanding of the end times we need to imitate Daniel. Daniel set his heart on understanding the end times (Dan. 10:12), he prayed and fasted for insight and revelation about the end times (Dan. 10:3), and he studied the prophetic Scriptures (Dan. 9:2).
Notes

3. Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus, s.v. “insight.”
Review Questions

True or False

1. Since Jesus said that we don’t know the day or hour of His return, understanding the end times is not that important.

2. Being ready is the most important end-time issue.

3. Understanding the end times is important because we are called to hasten the Lord’s return.

4. Praying for Israel is one of the most powerful ways that we can partner with God to hasten the Lord’s return.

5. Over the past fifty to sixty years, there have not been many events that indicate we are living in the end times.

6. Because God is sovereign, He does not need us to help Him fulfill end-time prophecy.

Fill in the Blank

7. We are called to ___________ the Lord’s return.

8. To be a prophetic voice that prepares the nations for the Lord’s return, we have to _______ _______ _______.

9. Only by understanding the end times will we have the ___________ and _______________ to endure to the end.

10. We need to be _______ and ___________ for the return of the Lord.

11. Having a _______________ of the end times empowers us to live disciplined lives.

12. Those who have __________ among the people will give _______________ to the many.
Matching (Place the letter of the correct answer in the blank space.)

_____ 13. Scripture verse(s) that exhort us to stay awake in the end times.

_____ 14. Scripture verse(s) that exhort us to obey the prophecy of the book of Revelation.

_____ 15. Scripture verse(s) that shows how our prayers will accelerate events in the book of Revelation.

_____ 16. Scripture verse(s) that exhort us to be ready for the end times.

_____ 17. Scripture verse(s) that exhort us to understand the end times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Matches for 13-17</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. 2 Peter 3:12</td>
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<td>b. Revelation 19:10</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Isaiah 62:6-7</td>
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<td>d. Matthew 24:32-34</td>
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<td>e. Matthew 24:42-44</td>
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<td>f. Revelation 8:1-6</td>
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<td>g. Daniel 12:9</td>
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<td>h. Revelation 22:7</td>
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<tr>
<td>i. Revelation 11:15</td>
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<td>j. Revelation 16:13-16</td>
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From the list to your right, choose the corresponding letter for three reasons why we need to understand the end times.

_____ 18. Possible Matches for 18-20

_____ 19. a. To partner with God in end-time events

_____ 19. b. To show believers and unbelievers how much we know

_____ 20. c. To be ready for the end times

_____ 20. d. To walk in the covenant blessings of God

_____ 20. e. To be equipped to debate our end-time beliefs

_____ 20. f. To be a prophetic voice to the nations
An Overview of the End Times

This session covers:

- A big picture look at the end times
- Three key prophetic timeframes
- Seven signs that indicate how close we are to the Lord’s return

This session corresponds to:

- Session 2 of Prophetic Vision for the End Times CDs

The Big Picture

1. In the end times, Jesus will be revealed as a Bridegroom, King, and Judge.

- The book with the most details about the end times does not begin with complex scenarios about end-time events or complicated charts. It begins with a simple but profound statement—"The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:1).
- The word for revelation in the Greek is *apokalupsis* and it means disclosure, uncovering, or bringing to light that which had been previously hidden or only obscurely seen.¹
- Right now, the Church is very familiar with the Jesus of Christmas, the Jesus of Easter, and the Jesus taught in Sunday School, but most believers don’t know Jesus as a Bridegroom, King, and Judge. However, this is changing as the Father reveals to the end-time Church who Jesus truly is.
- Jesus is no longer a baby in the manager, the man from Galilee, or even a broken man on the cross. Jesus is the resurrected, glorified, and exalted Son of...
God. He is the worthy Lamb who was slain for the sins of the world. He is the One whose beauty is so breathtaking that angels fall prostrate before Him in awe.

- When John saw Jesus he fell down as a dead man. John, the one who walked closer to Jesus than anyone else, was so overwhelmed by the resurrected and glorified Son of God that it almost killed him (Rev. 1:17).
- Jesus’ face shines like the sun in its strength. He has a sharp two-edged sword coming out of His mouth. And He is the Lion of Judah who triumphed over all of the works of Satan on the cross (Rev. 1:12-18; Rev. 5:1-5).
- When Jesus returns, He will strike down the nations with the sword of His mouth and rule the earth with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15).
- Many in the Church have put Jesus into a comfortable religious box. They don’t worship the Jesus of the Bible; they serve a westernized, religious version of Jesus that offers fire insurance from hell but does not demand the surrender of their entire lives.
- This is not the Jesus of the Bible. The Father will reveal the true Jesus to the Church and to the world before He returns.
- The Father will reveal Jesus as a tender and affectionate Bridegroom who has passionate love for His Bride. As a result, the end-time Church will completely understand her identity as a cherished Bride (Rev. 22:17).
- The Father will also reveal Jesus as a reigning King who is filled with power, majesty, and glory. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords and He is coming back to earth to overthrow evil governments and setup his kingdom in Jerusalem in order to rule the nations with a rod of iron.
- Before Jesus returns, the Church and the world will also know that Jesus is a terrifying Judge who will release destructive judgments that will remove everything that hinders His kingdom rule. Jesus is the only One worthy to open the book containing God’s redemptive plan for the earth and to break its seven seals (Rev. 5:5). Jesus is a Judge who will first purify the Church with strong correction and then He will release God’s fierce wrath to destroy the works of evil (Rev. 2-3; Rev. 19:15).

2. The kingdom of God is coming to the earth in fullness.

- When many people think about the second coming, they imagine Jesus returning for His church and taking her to heaven, where they will spend the rest of eternity. Some believe that the age to come will be nothing more exciting than floating on a cloud and playing a harp for all eternity.
- While it is true that we might spend a brief time in heaven, Jesus is returning to earth to setup His kingdom in Jerusalem where He will rule the nations with a rod of iron for a thousand years (Rev. 19:15, Rev. 20:4-6; Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 14:4-16; Zech. 9:10; Matt. 25:31-32).
- This time of prophetic fulfillment is known as the Messianic Age, the
Kingdom Age, or the Millennial Kingdom.

- The events that take place in the end times are the result of Jesus transitioning the world from the current age to the Kingdom Age by releasing judgments that remove everything hindering His kingdom rule.
- This viewpoint is summarized in Revelation 11:15: "Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.'"
- Jesus is returning to take over the world and remove every evil leader that will not submit to His Lordship (Ps. 110:5-7). To accomplish this, He will release judgments against the Antichrist and his empire, just like Moses released plagues against Egypt (Rev. 16:1-12).

3. The overcoming saints will rule the nations with Christ.

- When Jesus returns, He will not just wave His hand, snap His fingers, and magically restore the earth. It will take time for His kingdom to spread and His influence to affect every city in every nation.
- Isaiah wrote, "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore" (Isa. 9:7).
- Notice that there will be "no end to the increase of His government." Jesus’ government will be increasing during the Millennial Kingdom. There will be a progressive increase of Jesus’ influence throughout the nations until it penetrates every facet of every institution.
- The faithful saints who rule and reign with Christ will help spread and enforce Jesus’ influence over the cities of the earth.
- The Bible says that Jesus “has made us kings and priests to His God and Father” and “we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 1:5-6; 5:10, NKJV).
- However, the Bible also makes it clear that ruling and reigning with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom is not automatic—it is a reward for the overcomers.
- Jesus said that the believers in Thyatira had to overcome the works of Jezebel, which included idolatry, sensuality, immorality, impurity, and witchcraft, in order to have authority over the nations and rule them with a rod of iron in the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 2:25-29).
- Jesus said that the lukewarm believers at Laodicea had to overcome spiritual complacency, apathy, pride, and self-satisfaction in order to sit down with Jesus on His throne (Rev. 3:21).
- The end times are about believers overcoming the works of darkness in order to qualify for a place of authority during the Millennial Kingdom and for all eternity.

4. The Church will become a worthy Bride for Jesus.

- Most of the end-time teaching that is on television and in books focuses exclusively on the deep darkness that will cover the earth. The
emphasis is on the terror of the Antichrist’s regime, the seduction of
the harlot Babylon, the terrible persecution that will come upon believ-
ers, and God’s destructive judgments.
• The popular end-time teaching of our day subtly paints a picture of
the Church as a struggling, powerless, irrelevant, and ordinary group
of people who are anxiously waiting to be raptured away before the
Tribulation hits. This image is contrary to what Scripture teaches.
• Revelation 19:7 states, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory
to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has
made herself ready.”
• Paul wrote, “That He might present to Himself the church in all her
glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should
be holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:27).
• Before Jesus returns, the Church will become a worthy Bride for Jesus.
She will love Jesus with passion, serve Him in purity, minister in great
power, and partner with Him in activating end-time events.
• In the end times, God will have a Church of overcoming, powerful,
relevant, and glorious people who reveal the beauty, splendor, maj-
esty, power, and love of God to the world.

5. The Church will be on the earth in the end times.

• Many people have been taught that Jesus will return and take them to
heaven before the big trouble hits the earth. There is a common as-
sumption in the Church that we will watch end-time events unfold
while we are in heaven.
• Such a belief makes books like Revelation virtually irrelevant. Why
would you spend a lot of time studying the end times when you will be
raptured away before things get too bad?
• The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory is the most widely held belief in
the Church today. This is the most popular theory taught in pulpits,
magazines, books, movies, and on television.
• Made famous by the Left Behind series of books and movies, this the-
ory is widely held in the Body of Christ.
• This theory is not the most popular because of its Scriptural accuracy,
but because most people who are taught this theory rarely search the
Scriptures to validate the claims of these well-respected, intelligent,
articulate Bible teachers.
• Though we will discuss the timing of the rapture in Session 6, we need
a major paradigm shift in our understanding about the rapture. Make
no mistake about it—the Church will be on the earth during the end
times.

6. The Church has a mission-critical role to activate end-time events
and hasten the second coming of Christ.

• Because God is sovereign and He controls the affairs of the universe,
most people believe that the events described in the book of Revela-
tion will just happen one day without our involvement or participation.
• As a result of this mindset, few believers study the prophetic Scrip-
tures because they don’t see much practical benefit. After all, why read about something that God is going to do in His own timing and in His own way.

- The problem is that this mindset is not scriptural. Though God is sovereign and He can do anything He wants, He has given mankind authority over the earth (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 115:16). We are responsible for what takes place on the earth and prayer and obedience are the only way to get God involved in the affairs of the world. For more information on this topic, see Session 3 – God’s Need for Our Prayers in the Lifeschool class Becoming a House of Prayer.

- Because God has given mankind authority over the earth, the events in the book of Revelation and other end-time Scriptures will only take place when the Church on earth agrees with God’s plan in heaven. Thus, prayer, intercession, a deep understanding of the end times, making ourselves ready, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom to the nations are vital to God’s end-time plans.

- As we saw in the previous session, we have an active part to play in the timing of the Lord’s second coming (2 Peter 3:12). We are called to activate and accelerate the events recorded in the book of Revelation and hasten the return of Christ. How? By:
  - Making ourselves ready as the Bride of Christ and encouraging others to make themselves ready (Rev. 19:7; Rev. 22:17; Luke 1:17-18);
  - Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom to the nations (Matt. 24:14);
  - Praying for God’s kingdom to come to the earth in fullness (Matt. 6:10; Rev. 5:8; Rev. 8:1-6; Rev. 11:15);
  - Releasing the written judgments on the unrepentant nations (Ps. 149; Rev. 5:8, 8:1-6);
  - Praying for Jerusalem to become a praise in the earth (Isa. 62:6-7).

- Just as Moses released destructive plagues on Pharaoh and his empire, the end-time Church will release God’s judgments through prayer upon the Antichrist and his evil empire (Ex. 7-11; Rev. 8-11; Rev. 15-16).

- Revelation 5:8 reveals that Jesus will not activate the end-time events recorded in the book of Revelation until the incense bowls are filled with our prayers.

- Not only are these end-time judgments activated by our prayers, they are also accelerated and intensified by our prayers (Rev. 8:1-6).

- God is calling the end-time Church to partner with Jesus to release His justice against the ungodliness that perverts the earth and to prepare the way for His return (Ps. 149; Luke 18:1-8).

- Describing our role in releasing the end-time judgments to the earth, Mike Bickle states, “These judgment events do not happen to us as helpless victims of Satan, but they are released through us as participants with Jesus. Jesus’ judgments are released to remove all that hinders love. The main focus in the book of Revelation is God’s judg-
ment against the Antichrist’s empire. The secondary theme is tribulation against the saints from the Antichrist.”

- Psalm 149:9 reveals that we are called to “execute on them [the nations] the judgment written.” Where is the judgment written? It is written in prophetic books like Revelation, Isaiah, and Zephaniah.

- Mike Bickle calls the book of Revelation “Jesus’ end-time battle plan for the Church,” the “End-Time Book of Acts,” and a “canonized prayer manual that informs us of the ways in which Jesus will manifest His power.”

- In other words, as a canonized prayer manual, the book of Revelation contains the blueprint for how we should pray to activate end-time events and to hasten the second coming of Christ.

- Before we can release God’s justice to the earth and prepare the way for the Lord’s return, we have to be prepared. Paul said, “We are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete” (2 Cor. 10:6).

- In other words, before we can activate and accelerate the end-time events in the book of Revelation that will punish all disobedience, destroy every work of darkness, and release justice to the earth, our obedience must be complete. We must make ourselves ready (Rev. 19:7).

- Prior to the Lord’s second coming, there will be a generation who will keep the prophecy of the book of Revelation by overcoming everything Jesus listed in Revelation 2-3 and will partner with Him to release God’s justice against every form of evil, wickedness, perversion, and injustice so that the “kingdom of the world” will “become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 2-3, 11:15, 19:7, 22:7).

- The main point is this: We need a major paradigm shift in our understanding of the end times. We are not spectators but participators in releasing end-time events to the earth.

7. In the end times, the central issue is who will be worshiped in the earth.

- At the end of the age, there will be two global worship movements.
- The first worship movement involves the Holy Spirit restoring the fervent worship, the prophetic singing, and the apostolic authority that characterized the Tabernacle of David (Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:16-18; Isa. 24:14-16, 42:10-13).
- As a result, God’s kingdom will advance in unprecedented ways, the end-time harvest will be reaped, and God’s glory will fill the earth.
- This worship movement, which is at the beginning stages right now, is a forerunner to the Tabernacle of David being fully restored in the Millennial Kingdom. Isaiah prophesied that “A throne will even be established in lovingkindness [the throne of the Lord in Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom], and a judge [Jesus will judge between the nations] will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent [tabernacle] of David; moreover, he will seek justice and be prompt in righteousness” (Isa. 16:5).
Zechariah prophesied, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch [the Messiah], for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices” (Zech. 6:12-13).

When Jesus returns, He will “build the temple of the Lord” at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. From this Millennial Temple, Jesus will “sit and rule on His throne” and “the two offices” of priest and king will become one.

Then the nations will come “year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths” (Zech. 14:16).

The second end-time worship movement involves Satan establishing global worship where he and the Antichrist are worshiped and obeyed by most of the earth. The Bible says,

They worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast [the Antichrist]; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” (Rev. 13:4).

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain (Rev. 13:8).

The end-time generation will witness the greatest spiritual warfare in history because Satan is seeking to be worshiped and he will do whatever it takes to accomplish this. Look at these Scriptures that describe Satan’s thirst to be worshiped:

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (Isa. 14:12-14).

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me” (Matt. 4:8-9).

To be worshiped by the world, Satan has to first weaken the conscience of devoted followers from every religion, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus. Satan knows that it would be too big of a step for people with a religious heritage and background to suddenly become devoted Satan worshipers. Therefore, Satan will create a one-world religion of affirmation, humanistic justice, and tolerance without absolutes (Rev. 17).
This syncretistic religion will be a fusion of different religious beliefs that will unify the nations of the earth. John described this one-world religion as a “great harlot who sits on many waters” (Rev. 17:1). The ultimate goal of the harlot religion is to make the nations “drunk with the wine of her immorality” so that billions are intoxicated with deception and will receive the Antichrist as a man of peace (Rev. 17:2).

Because most wars in history have been religious wars, a one-world religion will minimize war and establish worldwide peace and safety (1 Thess. 5:3). The nations will rejoice and be intoxicated with the harlot’s promises of goodness, prosperity, compassion, acceptance, unity, and theology of tolerance.

Satan’s goal with the harlot religion is to make the nations drunk with deception and to prepare the way for the Antichrist to be worshiped. Once the harlot has intoxicated the nations, this one-world religion will be destroyed by the Antichrist’s regime (Rev. 17:12, 16) and will be replaced with intolerant Satan worship (Rev. 13:4, 8).

The Antichrist, fully possessed by Satan, will enact laws that force the nations to worship him and Satan. The Bible says that “the whole earth...worshiped the dragon [Satan] because he gave his authority to the beast [Antichrist], and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him’” (Rev. 13:3-4).

Because Satan and God are both seeking to be worshiped, the end-time generation will witness the greatest spiritual warfare in history.

This warfare will not end until Jesus returns with His saints, defeats the Antichrist and destroys his government, establishes His kingdom in the earth, and rules the world from Jerusalem.

Now that we have taken a big picture look at the end times, let’s examine three key prophetic time frames that are critical to understanding end-time events.

Three Key Prophetic Timeframes

1. Scripture describes three distinct prophetic timeframes in the end times.

- We find these recorded in Matthew 24, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, and Daniel 9:27.
- These three prophetic timeframes are known as:
  - The Beginning of Birth Pangs
  - Worldwide Peace and Safety
  - The Day of the Lord

- The transition from the current age to the Millennial Kingdom will be
just like the labor pangs that a woman endures before the birth of her child.

- These three prophetic timeframes are milestones in the birthing of a new age, with each timeframe increasing the intensity of the birth pangs.

2. The first prophetic timeframe is the Beginning of Birth Pangs.

- Jesus described the Beginning of Birth Pangs when He said:

  See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, “I am the Christ,” and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs (Matt. 24:4-8).

- The Beginning of Birth Pangs includes the following signs:

  - Increased deception
  - Wars and rumors of wars
  - Nations rising against nations
  - Kingdoms rising against kingdoms
  - Famines
  - Earthquakes

- A quick read of today’s newspaper reveals that these signs are certainly happening in our day and seem to be increasing in frequency and intensity.

- It is quite possible that the Beginning of Birth Pangs has already begun. Why? Look at what happened in World War I and World War II. Never before have so many nations fought against each other. Never before have we seen “nations rising against nations” and “kingdoms rising against kingdoms” like we did in World War I and World War II. These two wars ultimately led to Israel becoming a nation in 1948—which was the greatest fulfillment of prophecy since the first coming of Jesus.⁴

- In addition, the word translated nation is *ethnos*, which means a race or tribe. The word *ethnic* comes from *ethnos* and it means a people or group who have similar characteristics or backgrounds. Most of the recent wars are much more than geographical conflicts; they are ethnic conflicts as ethnic groups rise up against other ethnic groups.

Though it is likely that the end-time birth pangs have already begun, we don’t know how long they will last. They could last a few more years or a several more decades. The important thing to understand, however, is that we are living at the beginning of the end times.
3. The second prophetic timeframe is a period of Worldwide Peace and Safety.

- This second prophetic timeframe will result in an increase in labor pangs as it launches us closer to the birthing of a new age.
- The second prophetic timeframe will be a period of Worldwide Peace and Safety that will launch the Tribulation—the final seven years of this age.
- The Tribulation consists of two three-and-a-half year periods. The first three-and-a-half year timeframe is known as the period of Worldwide Peace and Safety. The second three-and-a-half years is known as the Great Tribulation, which we will discuss shortly. Paul wrote about the period of Worldwide Peace and Safety when he said:

  Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly [the Day of the Lord] like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape (1 Thess. 5:1-3).

- Notice Paul’s two references to “they.” First, Paul said that “they” will rejoice in peace and safety. Next, Paul said that “they” would not escape the sudden destruction.
- “They” refers to all the unbelieving nations on the earth, including Israel. These people will be deceived into thinking that the time of peace is God’s blessing instead of the work of the Antichrist.
- This period of Worldwide Peace and Safety will continue during the first three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation.
- This will be a time of peace and safety for unbelievers only. Faithful believers will experience continual pressure during this time of peace and safety. The one-world harlot religion will persecute and murder committed believers because they will not deny Jesus Christ and conform to this idolatrous religion (Rev. 6:9-11; Rev. 17:6).
- This period of Worldwide Peace and Safety will be the result of the Antichrist making a seven-year peace treaty with Israel and the Middle Eastern nations.
- Daniel wrote about this peace treaty in Daniel 9:27:

  And he [the Antichrist] will make a firm covenant with the many [Israel and Middle Eastern nations] for one week [seven-year period], but in the middle of the week [after three-and-a-half years] he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering [in the rebuilt Jerusalem Temple].

- The Hebrew word for week in this passage is shabuwa’, which means “seven, a period of seven (days or years).” Most scholars agree that the week in this passage is a week of years—not a week of days.
- The Antichrist will establish a political peace treaty with many nations,
including Israel and the Middle Eastern Islamic nations. This peace treaty will be designed for a seven-year period. However, in the middle of the week, or after three-and-a-half years, the Antichrist will break the treaty.

- This peace treaty will end the Beginning of Birth Pangs as it launches the period of Worldwide Peace and Safety.
- No one knows when the last seven-year period of natural history begins. However, we do know how it starts. It will start as a result of the Antichrist making a covenant with Israel and various Middle Eastern nations (Dan. 9:27).
- The global pressures during the first prophetic time frame—the Beginning of Birth Pangs—will make the Antichrist look successful as he appears to solve the world’s problems.
- The Antichrist’s credibility to establish his worldwide empire will be enhanced by his ability to make peace in the Middle East. He will be seen as a man who put an end to wars and international conflicts.

4. The third prophetic timeframe is known as the Day of the Lord.

- Although there is an actual day when we transition from this present age into the one-thousand year reign of Jesus Christ (Rev. 20:6), the Day of Lord is not just a one day event.
- The Day of the Lord refers to the positive and negative events that will intensify in the final three-and-a-half years before Jesus returns.6
- The Day of the Lord will be a time of heavy labor when the birth pangs will reach their greatest intensity. The Day of the Lord is the prophetic timeframe that will give birth to the Millennial Kingdom.
- The Day of the Lord is described as both great and terrible. Notice these verses:

  For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11, NKJV).

  I will send you Elijah...before...the great and dreadful day of the LORD (Mal. 4:5, NKJV).

- The Day of the Lord will involve two vastly different extremes.
- It will be a great day for believers because they will experience the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit in history (Joel 2:28-32). We will look at the Great Day of the Lord in more detail in Session 3.
- It will be a very terrible day to the rebellious who will witness the most severe outpouring of God’s judgments ever seen (Rev. 6-20). We will look at the Terrible Day of the Lord in more detail in Session 4.

We need to maintain a proper view of the Day of the Lord. We must be careful not to be too negative or too positive. The Day of the Lord will be the best of times and the worst of times.
5. The Day of the Lord escalates when the Antichrist breaks his peace treaty with Israel and sets up the Abomination of Desolation in the Jerusalem Temple.

- Previously, we looked at the seven-year peace treaty that the Antichrist will make with Israel and the Middle Eastern nations (Dan. 9:27).
- After three-and-a-half years, however, the Antichrist will break this treaty and put an end to temple worship (Dan. 9:27). Following this, the Antichrist will enthrone himself as God in the Jewish temple and force the whole world to worship him (Matt. 24:15-22; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 13).
- The Bible describes this time as the “abomination of desolation” (Dan. 12:11). Jesus said,

Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)....Then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short (Matt. 24:15-22).

- The abomination is the idolatry which will fill the whole earth (Rev. 13:4, 13:8). The desolation is what will happen to the nations under the Antichrist’s regime as he subdues, conquers, and brings the world under his control (Rev. 13:4; 13:7). Describing this, Daniel wrote, “On the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate” (Dan. 9:27).
- The Abomination of Desolation will clearly signal the Day of the Lord—also known as the Great Tribulation.
- This abomination of false worship will result in the desolation of many nations as the Antichrist subdues the world under his power and dominion.
- Isaiah, describing the Antichrist, said that he would make the earth tremble, shake kingdoms, make the world into a wilderness, overthrow cities, and not allow the prisoners to go home (Isa. 14:16-17).
- The Antichrist will be a military and political genius who will form a ten-nation coalition that will take over the world (Rev. 13:5-7; 17:12-13; Dan. 11:40-45).
- Notice how the book of Daniel describes the Antichrist:

A king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue. His power will be mighty, but not by his own power [he will be empowered by Satan], and he will destroy to an extraordinary degree [the Antichrist will make desolate] and prosper and perform his will; he will destroy mighty men and the holy people (Dan. 8:23-24).
As the Day of the Lord escalates, the Antichrist will rule the nations, demand worship from the entire world, and turn his anger toward Jews and Christians (Rev. 13:1-8; Zech. 13:8-9).

6. The Day of the Lord will be the worst time in history for the rebellious as God’s judgments are released in full measure.

- To those who refuse to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Day of the Lord will be “very terrible” as they experience the most severe outpouring of God’s judgments ever seen (Rev. 6-20). Jesus’ judgments will shake all that can be shaken (Hag. 2:6-8; Heb. 12:26).
- The Day of the Lord will intensify dramatically as Jesus releases twenty-one judgments in the form of seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls of wrath (Rev. 6, 8-9, 15-16).
- These judgments include a world war, famine, economic chaos, natural disasters, unprecedented demonic activity, destruction on the Antichrist’s worldwide empire, and the greatest earthquake in history.
- The Day of the Lord is about the “wrath of God...poured out full strength” (Rev. 14:10, NKJV).

7. The climatic event of the Day of the Lord is when Jesus returns, destroys the Antichrist and his armies, and sets up His kingdom in Jerusalem.

- Jesus is returning as a Warrior King to destroy God’s enemies.
- Jesus is coming to crush the Antichrist—the cruelest and most ruthless dictator in history—with the mere breath of His lips (2 Thess. 2:8). Jesus is coming to vanquish God’s enemies and to setup His kingdom.
- The Antichrist and his armies, along with the other kings of the earth and their armies, will engage in direct combat with Jesus and His army of saints and angels. Known as the Battle of Armageddon, this will be the culminating event of the Day of the Lord (Rev. 19:11-21).
- Describing this same battle, Zechariah prophesied, “Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle” (Zech. 14:3-4). Jesus the Warrior King will send a “great panic” upon them. As a result, these armies will fight one another (Zech. 14:12-13).
- After Jesus and His army wins the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus will establish His kingdom in Jerusalem and will be worshiped as the King of the earth (Zech. 14:9).

How Close Are We?

1. There are seven signs that indicate we are living at the beginning of the end times.

- Though we cannot know the day or the hour when Jesus returns, we can—and should—know the season (Matt. 24:32-34, 36).
- Knowing the signs that point to Jesus’ return puts a sense of urgency
in our hearts to make ourselves ready for the great and terrible Day of
the Lord.
- By understanding prophecy and keeping up with the news, we can see
several signs which indicate that we are living in the end times. Seven
of these signs are:

1. **Israel’s restoration** = Before 1948, many Bible prophecies
could not be fulfilled because they depended upon Israel being
a nation. That all changed on May 14, 1948 when the United
Nations voted 33 to 13 to make Israel a sovereign state. Since
that time, many end-time prophecies have been fulfilled, in-
cluding millions of Jews returning to Israel, Jerusalem being
established as the capital city, thousands of Israeli Jews getting
saved, and Israel becoming a center of world controversy (Jer.
16:14-16; Isa. 43:5-7; Zech. 14:2; Luke 21:24; Rom. 11:25;
Zech. 12:1-3, 10).

2. **The gospel being preached to all nations** = Jesus said that He
would not return until the gospel of the kingdom was preached
to all nations (Matt. 24:14). Mission organizations project that
the gospel will be heard by every people group and language
on the earth for the first time by 2025. Churches exist in all
251 nations and territories of the earth, the Bible has been
translated into 2,062 languages (available to 98 percent of the
world’s population), and Wycliffe expects to have the Bible
translated in every known language of the earth by 2040. Though
the gospel of the kingdom involves much more than
the gospel of forgiveness (we will look at this in detail in Ses-
son 3), the rapid spread of Christianity in the nations is pre-
paring the way for the gospel of the kingdom to be preached in
all the world as a witness.

3. **Increased globalization** = Revelation 17-18 describes a one-
world religion, economy, and political network that will be es-
tablished in the end times. We see evidence that the world is
rapidly moving in this direction as we observe the rise of the
United Nations, the manner in which finances, commerce, com-
munication, and politics are moving from a nation-based con-
text to a more global expression, and the increase of universal-
ism.

4. **Increase in knowledge and transportation** = Daniel 12:4 tells
us that in the end times, “many will go back and forth, and
knowledge will increase.” We all know that in the twentieth
century, especially in the latter parts of it, knowledge, trans-
portation, and technology have dramatically increased. This
Scripture could not have been fulfilled until our lifetime. Today,
you can get to almost anywhere in the world in a day. This was
unheard of until the late twentieth century.
5. **Increase in technology and communication** = What was once science fiction has become a real part of our everyday lives. The internet has changed the world forever, allowing knowledge, instant communication, and access to live and on-demand video to increase in an unprecedented way. Satellite transmission allows the world to see breaking news instantly. In fact, several prophecies require this type of technology to be fulfilled (Rev. 11:9; 13:3). Breakthroughs in microchip technologies will probably be used to implement the mark of the beast—the Antichrist’s one-world economic system (Rev. 13:15-17).

6. **A worldwide focus on Iraq** = Since 1990, the eyes of the world have been focused on Iraq. This Middle Eastern nation is frequently on the front page of the newspaper and the top story of the nightly news. Why? Partly because of Saddam Hussein and the two recent wars, but there is another reason. Most prophecy scholars believe that Babylon—the once prominent city fifty miles south of Baghdad—will be rebuilt and used as one of the headquarters of the Antichrist. Just as Jerusalem suddenly emerged from the ashes and was rebuilt, Babylon will also be rebuilt. Why? Because the judgments on Babylon prophesied in Jeremiah 50-51, Isaiah 13-14, and Revelation 17-18 have never been fulfilled.

7. **The unification and strengthening of Europe** = Most prophecy scholars believe that the Antichrist will rise out of some type of European super state. Why? Daniel 9:26 states “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing [the crucifixion of Jesus], and the people [the Roman Empire] of the prince who is to come [the Antichrist] will destroy the city and the sanctuary [Jerusalem destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans]” (Dan. 9:26). In summary, this prophecy predicated that a nation would destroy Jerusalem and the temple after the Messiah was killed. Who did this? Daniel says “the people of the prince who is to come.” The prince who is to come is the Antichrist and the people who fulfilled this prophecy were the Romans in 70 A.D. Because of this and other prophecies, scholars believe that Europe (the place where the Roman Empire existed) will be unified and strengthened right before Jesus returns and that the Antichrist will rise from this super state (Dan. 2:41-45). Though we don’t know exactly what form this will ultimately take, the beginning of this is already happening. In 1993 the European Union (EU) was formed. This political and economic alliance located primarily in Europe has twenty-seven states, almost 500 million citizens, and generates approximately thirty percent of the world’s gross domestic product. The EU has developed a single market through a standardized system of laws and sixteen members have adopted a common currency.
Seeing these signs unfold before our eyes makes the end times relevant and real. Because we live at the beginning of the end, there is an urgency to prepare for the end times right now. Though it might take a few decades for the heavy birth pangs to be released, we can’t wait until then to make ourselves ready. We must begin today.

Notes


3. Ibid.

4. As a result of World War I, the Ottoman Empire no longer ruled Palestine, the British received the mandate from the League of Nations to oversee Palestine, and the Balfour Declaration was created by the British, which was instrumental in the creation of Israel. After World War II, with six million Jews perishing at the hands of Hitler, most of the world was sympathetic to the Jewish people having a sovereign homeland in Palestine. This paved the way for the United Nations to vote in favor of partitioning Palestine into a Jewish state and a Palestinian state. Looking at how Israel became a nation after these two world wars, it appears that these wars—in part—was a result of God restoring Israel and the devil fighting against this with all of his might. Why? Because Israel is the key to the Lord’s return and the devil wants to stop that at all costs (Matt. 23:39). Though we can’t say with certainty, it is very probable that the Beginning of Birth Pangs began during World War I and World War II—right before Israel became a nation in 1948. Consider also how many wars since 1948 have involved the Arabs and their allies attempting to destroy Israel. Not to mention Iran’s ambitions to acquire nuclear weapons and to wipe Israel off the map. Israel is already an international source of controversy that will result in several future wars (Ezek. 38-39; Zech. 12, 14). That is why it is very likely that we have already entered into the Beginning of Birth Pangs.

5. *The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* (Ontario, Canada: Woodside Bible Fellowship and the Institute for Creation Research, 1993), s.v. “shabuwa’,” referenced from PC Study Bible v3.2 (Seattle, WA: Biblesoft 2001). To the ancient Hebrews, a "week" was a period of seven days or seven years. Israel had two uses of a week instead of one. Genesis 29:27-28 is an example of how a week was used to represent seven years. A week of seven years was a well known term in Daniel’s day.

6. There is some debate among scholars about the exact definition of the Day of the Lord. Some refer to it as a single day when the Lord returns and sets up His kingdom. Others believe that the Day of the Lord describes everything that happens during the Tribulation, the second coming, and the Millennial Kingdom. Others think the Day of the Lord only refers to the last three-and-half years of the Tribulation. We chose this definition to keep things simple. This definition does not rule out the other views, but its main focus is on the last three-and-half years before Jesus returns, which is the primary emphasis of the Day of the Lord in Scripture.


8. Ibid.
Review Questions

True or False

1. The events that take place in the end times are the result of Jesus transitioning the world from the current age to the Kingdom Age.

2. The Church will watch from heaven as Jesus releases the judgments during the Tribulation.

3. Because God is sovereign, the Church cannot affect the timing of Jesus’ return.

4. The greatest warfare in history is a spiritual battle over who will be worshiped in the earth.

5. One of the main signs that indicate how close we are to the end times is the rise of a unified Europe.

6. The greatest end-time labor pangs will take place during the period of Worldwide Peace and Safety because many believers will be persecuted and killed.

7. The book of Revelation is a prayer manual that shows us how to pray in the end times.

Fill in the Blank

8. God is calling the end-time Church to partner with Jesus to release His _________ against the ungodliness that perverts the earth and to _________ the way for His return.

9. In the end times, Jesus will be revealed as a _________, _________, and _________.

10. The events that take place in the end times are the result of Jesus _________ the world from the current age to the Kingdom Age by releasing _________ that remove everything hindering His kingdom rule.

11. The faithful saints who rule and reign with Christ will help spread and enforce Jesus’ _________ over the cities of the earth.
12. Because God has given mankind _______ over the earth, the events in the book of Revelation and other end-time Scriptures will only take place when the Church on earth _______ with God’s plan in heaven.

13. Before we can release God’s _______ to the earth and prepare the way for the Lord’s return, we have to be _______.

14. Most prophecy scholars believe that _______—the once prominent city fifty miles south of Baghdad—will be _______ and used as one of the __________ of the Antichrist.

Match the statement on the left with the correct prophetic timeframe on the right (You can use an answer more than once).

| 15. The one-world harlot religion will persecute and murder committed believers because they will not deny Jesus Christ and conform to this idolatrous religion. |
| 16. The positive and negative events that will intensify in the final three-and-a-half years before Jesus returns. |
| 17. Includes the following signs: Increased deception, wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, kingdoms rising against kingdoms, famines, and earthquakes. |
| 18. Escalates when the Antichrist breaks his peace treaty with Israel and sets up the Abomination of Desolation in the Jerusalem Temple. |
| 19. It is quite possible that we are already living in this time period. |
| 20. The Antichrist will make a seven-year peace treaty with Israel and the Middle Eastern nations. |

Possible Matches for 15-20

- a. The Beginning of Birth Pangs
- b. Worldwide Peace and Safety
- c. The Day of the Lord
The Great Day of the Lord

An Overview of the Day of the Lord

1. The Day of the Lord is described as both great and terrible.

   - The Day of the Lord refers to the positive and negative events that will intensify in the final three-and-a-half years before Jesus returns.
   - The Day of the Lord is described as both great and terrible. Notice these verses:

     For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11, NKJV).

     I will send you Elijah...before...the great and dreadful day of the LORD (Mal. 4:5, NKJV).

   - The Day of the Lord will involve two vastly different extremes.
   - It will be a very terrible day to the rebellious who will witness the most severe outpouring of God’s judgments ever seen (Rev. 6-20). We will look at the Terrible Day of the Lord in more detail in Session 4.
   - It will be a great day for believers because they will
experience the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit in history (Joel 2:28-32). We will look at the Great Day of the Lord in this session.

The Great Day of the Lord refers to the positive events that will escalate in the final three-and-a-half years before Jesus returns. Even though we do not live in this time period yet, we do live in the days when these events are beginning to happen. As we get closer to the end of the age, these prophetic events will intensify until they are completely fulfilled in the generation that Jesus returns. In this session, we will look specifically at five reasons why the Day of the Lord will be great.

1. The End-Time Church Will Be Glorious.

1. In the end times, the glory of the Lord will rise upon His people.

- Isaiah described it like this:

   Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you (Isa 60:1-2).

- Jesus explained the same principle to His disciples in a parable that will be fulfilled in the end times. Known as the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed. While the good seed was being sown, the enemy also sowed tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:24-25).

- Explaining this parable, Jesus said that the good seed are the “sons of the kingdom” while the tares are the “sons of the evil one” (Matt. 13:38).

- He added that the “harvest is the end of the age” (Matt. 13:39).

- In this parable, Jesus revealed that both lawlessness and righteousness will reach full maturity at the end of the age. Though the world will descend into deep darkness, the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the glory of their Father (Matt. 13:43).

- As we see in both passages, God’s glory will grow like maturing wheat until the harvest is completed at the end of the age.

- As we approach the return of the Lord, the light of God’s glory and the darkness of sin and demonic defilement will intensify until we can “again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him” (Mal. 3:18).
2. The Church will be glorious before the Lord returns.

- Ephesians 5:27 states, “That He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:27).
- The Greek word that is translated “glory” is endoxos, which means “in glory, glorious, splendid, noble, notable, in good or in great esteem, of high repute, illustrious, honorable.”
- Endoxos is used three other times in the New Testament:
  - In Luke 7:25, endoxos is translated “splendidly clothed”;
  - In Luke 13:17, endoxos is translated “glorious things” to describe the miracles of Jesus;
  - In 1 Corinthians 4:10, endoxos is translated “honorable” (KJV) or “distinguished” (NAS).
- In summary, Jesus will present to Himself a Church that is glorious, beautiful, noteworthy, highly esteemed, powerful, honorable, and renowned.
- The end-time Church will be glorious because she will love Jesus with passion, walk in purity, and operate in great power.

3. The end-time Church will love Jesus with passion.

- Before the Lord returns, the first commandment—which instructs us to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength—will be restored to first place. The Church will love Jesus above every other love, will have a desire to worship God with passion, and will obey Him wholeheartedly.
- Before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed to the Father, “I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:24-26).
- Jesus prayed that the same love the Father has for Him would be in His people, His Bride. Before the Lord returns, this prayer will be answered.
- Jesus will have a Bride that loves Him just like His Father loves Him. Though today’s Church has been lulled into a deep sleep, it will not end that way. The Father will answer Jesus’ prayer. He will give Jesus a Bride who will love Him with the same love the Father has for Him.
- When the Father answers Jesus’ prayer, the first commandment will be restored to first place.
- “The first and great commandment” is “you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37-38, NKJV).
- In the end times, there will be a people who love God with their deepest desires and affections, who meditate upon the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit throughout the day, who will obey every part of God’s Word, and who will persevere in love until the end.
- Before the Lord returns, the Church will have a burning passion for Jesus. The dictionary defines passion as “extreme, compelling emo-
tion; intense emotional drive or excitement; strong love or affection; the object of any strong desire or fondness.\textsuperscript{2}

- Passion usually implies a strong emotion that has an overpowering or compelling effect.
- Passion is also a strong liking or enthusiasm for a subject or activity. Some people are passionate about football. Others are passionate about technology, pictures, or music.
- In the end times, the Bride of Christ will have a burning passion for Jesus as we return to our first love, overcome lukewarmness, keep the first commandment, and love Jesus like the Father does.

4. The end-time Church will walk in purity.

- Before the Lord returns, the Church will be pure. That is, the Church will become Christ-like, walking in love, humility, and meekness.
- Paul declared that the Church would be without "spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:27).
- Presently, much of the Church is more like a harlot than a bride, more worldly than Christ-like, and more proud than meek.
- Although much of the Church is currently lawless, independent, stubborn, and rebellious, God’s Spirit is moving in preparation for the Lord’s return to make the Bride of Christ pure and holy.
- Before the Lord returns, the Holy Spirit will baptize the Church in the refiner’s fire to remove every spot, stain, and wrinkle.
- Speaking about the end times, Daniel wrote, “Many will be purged, purified and refined” (Dan. 12:10).
- Just like Esther went through six months of myrrh baths in order to cleanse her, the Bride of Christ will be made ready for the King through our own myrrh baths (Est. 2:12). Myrrh, which was used for embalming, is symbolic of death. As we take up our cross and die to self, we will emerge as a pure, holy, and worthy Bride for Jesus.
- Hebrews 12:14 states, “Pursue...holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (NKJV).
- Holiness means to be set apart or separated from something else. Therefore, to walk in holiness, we must separate from the ungodly culture of this evil age, we must separate from any lawlessness that has gained a foothold in our flesh, and we must separate from every area of demonic defilement.
- Revelation 19:7 says, “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (NKJV).
- Notice that God does not make the Bride ready; we make ourselves ready.
- How will the Bride of Christ make herself ready? She will find such deep delight in the Son of God that the desire for sin will evaporate. Passion for Jesus always conquers a thousand evils.
- Because the Bride will love Jesus above everything else, she will hunger and thirst to be holy, just like her Bridegroom. She will pursue holiness—not just to escape God’s judgments—but because she truly
loves Him.

- John wrote, "It has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).
- John said that we will be Christ-like when Jesus appears. Therefore, when we think of holiness, we should immediately think of Christ-likeness.
- That means the wife of the Lamb will also be like the Lamb. That is, we will be Christ-like in nature at the coming of the Lord.

5. The end-time Church will operate in great power.

- Before the Lord returns, the Church will operate in great power with signs, wonders, and miracles. In fact, Jesus said that the Church will do greater works than He did (John 14:12). This includes hearing God’s voice, healing the sick, and setting the oppressed free.
- The end-time Church will minister in great power and maturity in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We will be seasoned in prophetic ministry and have great wisdom. We will have mountain-moving faith, perform astonishing miracles, operate in healing, and cast out demons with a word.
- The end-time Church will be like a mighty army that invades the earth with miracle-working power. We will no longer be limited to convincing people of the resurrection of Christ through intellectualism. We will also be able to prove the reality of His resurrection by raising people from the dead by His miracle-working power.
- Daniel described this powerful, end-time army when he wrote: "The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits" (Daniel 11:32-33, NKJV).
- As the Church pursues the intimate knowledge of God, we will be entrusted with the powers of the age to come. Cancers will be healed. People with AIDS will be cured. The dead will be raised. Creative miracles will take place because the kingdom of God does not consist of words, but of power (1 Cor. 4:21).
- On August 3, 1979, Howard Pittman had a near death experience in which he was taken to heaven. During this time, God revealed to Howard that a great outpouring of the Spirit was coming. This would result in the end-time Church doing greater miracles than the early apostles. Notice what he wrote in his book, Placebo:

    God is now in the process of recruiting an army with which God will shake this old world one more time. By working through his soldiers, God will produce great miracles that will shake the established hierarchy of the so-called organized religion that is in this world today. These soldiers that God is now recruiting will demonstrate the power of God to a greater extent than did the disciples in the Pentecostal age. Now the recruitment has begun in earnest because God is about to perform the great miracles through his army that God promised us God would do
Prophetic Vision for the End Times

in the Bible. John the Baptist brought the spirit of Elijah into this world and he did not even know he had it. John denied it, but Jesus confessed that it was so. The purpose of that spirit was to make straight the paths of the coming of the Lord. 3

- Joel prophesied that the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit in history will take place just prior to the Lord’s return:

  It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes (Joel 2:28-31).

- This prophecy was only partially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The complete fulfillment will take place right before “the great and awesome day of the Lord.”
- Although we can all partake of the Holy Spirit’s power right now, there will be a progressive increase of the Spirit’s anointing until Joel’s prophecy is completely fulfilled.
- The Lord promised to pour out His Spirit upon all believers. As a result, the Church will operate in the spirit of prophecy like never before in history. There will be unprecedented prophetic revelation given to every believer through dreams and visions.
- The Holy Spirit will be poured out upon the young and the old, men and women, without concern for social status or ministry position.
- As a result of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the end-time Church will operate in the greatest power in the history of the Church.
- The power and miracles displayed in the book of Acts, the spirit and power of Elijah, and the authority of Moses will be released into the earth before the Lord returns (Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 17:11; Luke 1:17-18; Rev. 11:3-6).

2. The Gospel of the Kingdom Will Be Preached In All Nations.

1. Jesus said the gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all nations before He will return.

- While teaching the disciples about the end times, Jesus said, “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14, NKJV).
- Notice that “the end will come” only after the “gospel of the kingdom” has been preached in all the nations. That means Jesus will not return until the good news of the kingdom has been proclaimed in every nation.
- It also means that we can hasten His return by proclaiming the gospel
of the kingdom to the nations. Or we can slow down His return by fail-
ing to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the nations.

2. **For years, the Church has mistaken the gospel of the kingdom for the
gospel of salvation and forgiveness.**

- The gospel of the kingdom certainly includes the gospel of salvation
  and forgiveness through the cross of Jesus Christ, but it is much more
  than this.
- Without a doubt, preaching about salvation through the cross of Jesus
  Christ is the most important aspect of the gospel of the kingdom, but
  it is only the beginning of it.
- If we end there, we have not fully preached the gospel of the king-
dom.

3. **We need to understand what Jesus meant by the gospel of the king-
dom.**

- The word gospel in the Greek means “good news” or “good message.”
  So the gospel of the kingdom is the good news or the good message
  about God’s kingdom.
- A kingdom is a dominion or physical sphere of rule involving a ruler, a
  people who are ruled, and a physical territory where the rule takes
  place.
- This means that there must be: A sovereign, authoritative ruler; a
  realm to rule; and the exercising of authority.
- In the kingdom of God, Jesus is the King of all kings; He is the au-
thoritative ruler.
- The realm in which God’s kingdom rule exists is first in the hearts of
  born-again believers. Jesus taught that the “kingdom of God is within
  you” (Luke 17:21). Paul said that the “kingdom of God is not eating
  and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”
  (Rom. 14:17). Because Christ the King lives within us, we take the
  kingdom of God wherever we go.
- We also exercise the authority of God’s kingdom as we pray, preach
  the gospel, heal the sick, and cast out demons. Jesus told his disci-
 iples, “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at
  hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out de-
 mons” (Matt. 10:7-8).
- In summary, Jesus is the King of the kingdom of God, His rule begins
  in our hearts because He lives within us, and we extend His rule as we
  preach the kingdom of God, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the
  lepers, and cast out demons. In other words, “The kingdom of God
does not consist in words but in power” (1 Cor. 4:20).
- George Eldon Ladd, a popular theologian, made famous the statement
  that the kingdom of God is “already but not yet.”
- In other words, the kingdom is now because we have the King living in
  us, but it is not yet fully here until Jesus returns.
- That means we have to proclaim to the nations that Jesus, the King of
  Glory, is returning to take over the world, to rule every sphere of soci-
48 Prophetic Vision for the End Times

ety, and that we as His Bride have a vital role to fulfill in His global empire.

- To summarize, the gospel of the kingdom has three main components:
  - The message that Jesus forgives sins and that He offers salvation to all who call upon His name;
  - The demonstration of God’s power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons;
  - The proclamation to the nations that Jesus, the King of Glory, is returning to take over the world, to rule every sphere of society, that we as His Bride have a vital role to fulfill in His global empire, and that the nations must prepare for the transition into the Kingdom Age.

4. Before the Lord returns, all three aspects of the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed to all nations.

- For the most part, the Church has done a good job of evangelizing the world and preaching the good news of salvation and forgiveness in Jesus. Mission organizations project that the gospel will be heard by every people group and language on the earth for the first time by 2025. Churches exist in all 251 nations and territories of the earth, the Bible has been translated into 2,062 languages (available to 98 percent of the world’s population), and Wycliffe expects to have the Bible translated in every known language of the earth by 2040.

- Over the past century, God has also been progressively restoring power back to His Church. As a result, the second aspect of the gospel of the kingdom has begun to be proclaimed. The nations are beginning to witness the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

- However, the Church has neglected the third aspect of the gospel of the kingdom—the prophetic proclamation that Jesus is coming again to take over this planet and rule the nations with a rod of iron from Jerusalem.

- In this hour, the Holy Spirit is raising up prophetic messengers who will proclaim the full message of the gospel of the kingdom. Not only will they preach the good news of salvation and operate in the power of the Holy Spirit, but they will proclaim to the nations the good news that Jesus is returning as the King of Glory.

- God will use these messengers to prepare the Bride of Christ so that she is made ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb and is fully qualified and prepared to rule the nations with Jesus in the age to come.

- Just as the Holy Spirit anointed John the Baptist to turn Israel back to God and to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:16-17), God will anoint these prophetic messengers to prepare the Bride of Christ for the end times and to prepare the nations for the coming Day of the Lord.

- As these forerunners proclaim the full message of the gospel of the kingdom, they will also announce the coming day of God’s justice,
when He will cleanse the world of evil, remove everything that hinders love, and destroy every hindrance to His kingdom rule.

3. The Greatest Harvest in History Will Be Reaped.

1. The harvest at the end of the age will be unlike anything in history.
   - John described this massive harvest in Revelation 7:9-14:
     
     After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”...Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?” I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

   - Notice that John described “a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues” coming “out of the great tribulation.” As we saw in the last session, the Great Tribulation is the same as the great and terrible Day of the Lord.
   - So John sees a number too great to count who are born again during the intense pressures of the end of the age.
   - How great will the harvest be? We can only speculate, but it could be in the billions.
   - To give an idea of the massive numbers that will come into the kingdom, let’s look at the projections of the world’s population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the current world population as of December 31, 2008 is approximately 6.7 billion people. Projections show that in 2030 the population will grow to approximately 8 billion people.
   - Imagine that 8 billion people are alive during the end-time harvest. And for the sake of simplicity, let’s say half choose God and half choose evil. Of the 4 billion people that choose God, suppose that half are already saved. That means, for the purpose of our example, 2 billion people will be born again in the end times.
   - Of course we are just speculating, but it gives you an idea of just how massive the end-time harvest will be.

2. The end-time harvest also includes the Church coming to full maturity as Christ-like sons.
   - The end-time harvest involves much more than a couple billion people
putting their faith in Christ (as glorious as that will be). It also includes believers fully maturing into Christ-like sons.

- How do we know this? From the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43).
- In this parable, Jesus said that the "harvest is the end of the age" (Matt. 13:39). He went on to say that the good seed are the "sons of the kingdom" who are glorified and will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:38, 43).
- So the end-time harvest is all about the Father conforming us "to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).
- At the end of the age, the Father will bring many sons to glory who will shine like the sun in its strength (Heb. 2:10; Matt. 13:43).
- Paul said, "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).
- What is true about Christ God wants to be true about us. We are invited to be "fellow heirs with Christ," which means that we are called to rule and reign with Christ in the fullness of the Father's glory forever.
- Therefore, the massive end-time harvest includes millions of people who will come to faith in Christ and who will mature into the likeness of Christ.

4. Israel Will Be Restored and All Israel Will Be Saved.

1. Israel will be restored according to ancient prophecy.

- Speaking to the Jewish people, Peter told them, "Repent and return...that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets" (Acts 3:19-21).
- This verse teaches that Jesus will not return until the "period of restoration of all things which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets."
- What was one of the primary messages of the Old Testament prophets? Isaiah summarized it when he said that Jerusalem will become "a praise in the earth" ( Isa. 62:7). He also described Jerusalem as the place where justice, peace, divine decrees, instruction, and the Word of God will go forth into the nations ( Isa. 2:2-4). Isaiah also revealed that kings and queens, statesmen and presidents will minister to Israel and bring in the wealth of the nations ( Isa.60:3-5, 10-11).
- Jeremiah declared, "At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the Lord,' and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord" (Jer. 3:17).
- Zechariah prophesied, "I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain" (Zech. 8:3).
- The point is this: Israel will be restored according to ancient prophecy
in the end times.
- This restoration process has already begun with Israel becoming a nation in 1948, millions of Jewish people returning back to the land, Jerusalem becoming the capital city in 1967, and thousands of Jews believing that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel.
- Though Israel is in the process of being restored, the ultimate restoration will be when the kingdom is restored back to Israel (Acts 1:6).

2. All Israel will be saved.
- Looking again at what Peter told the Jewish people, he said, "Repent and return...that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you" (Acts 3:19-20).
- According to this verse, Jesus’ return depends upon Israel repenting and returning back to God.
- Jesus stated the same truth when He told the Jews, "For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matt. 23:39, NIV).
- Paraphrasing this verse, Jesus told the Jews gathered in Jerusalem, "Just as you acknowledged Me as your King and Messiah a day before (Matt. 21:9), I will not return until you do the same thing."
- According to Paul, after the Gentile harvest is complete, “all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob’” (Rom. 11:26-27).
- When Paul wrote this, he quoted Isaiah 59:20, which states, “A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob.”
- In the end times, God will fully restore Israel and all Israel will be saved.


1. In the end times, God promised to restore the Tabernacle of David.
- In a prophecy that is highly relevant in our day, Amos prophesied that the Tabernacle of David would be the divine key to possessing the nations in the end times. He prophesied,

  In that day I will raise up the fallen booth [tabernacle] of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name (Amos 9:11-12).

- In the New Testament, James showed that the tabernacle’s restoration was interrelated with the salvation of the Gentiles (Acts 15:16-18).
- We live in the days when God is restoring the fervent worship, the
prophetic singing, and the apostolic authority that characterized the Tabernacle of David. As a result, God’s kingdom will advance in unprecedented ways, enormous wealth will be transferred into the Church, the end-time harvest will be reaped, and God’s glory will fill the earth.

2. Before the Lord returns, the global Church will function as a house of prayer for all nations.

- Shortly before His death, Jesus went to the temple, cleansed it of defilement and worldliness, and declared, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN” (Mark 11:17).
- Jesus was not just rebuking the group of people gathered at the temple that day. He was declaring a universal truth about His house. His house is a house of prayer for all nations. Jesus could have called His house anything, but He chose to call it a house of prayer.
- In this hour, the Holy Spirit is calling the Church back to the place of prayer and is in the process of establishing the greatest prayer movement in history.

3. The global worship and prayer movement will prepare the way for the Lord’s return.

- As we move deeper into the end times, God is progressively restoring the Tabernacle of David and establishing the Church as a house of prayer for the nations. We are living in the days of the greatest worship and prayer movement in history. This work will increase dramatically in the generation the Lord returns.
- After describing the great end-time shakings that will bring the earth to its knees (Isa. 24:1-13), Isaiah described the end-time worship movement that will fill the earth with the glory of the Lord. He wrote, "They raise their voices, they shout for joy; they cry out from the west concerning the majesty of the Lord. Therefore glorify the Lord in the east, the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, in the coastlands of the sea. From the ends of the earth we hear songs, "Glory to the Righteous One” (Isa. 24:14-16).
- In the midst of the greatest darkness, evil, perversion, and the Lord’s most severe judgments in history, the global worship and prayer movement will fill the earth and prepare the way for the Lord’s return.
- As the global Church unifies in the house of prayer across the cities of the earth and cries out for justice to be released, the Lord will respond and drive evil from the planet (Luke 18:1-8; Rev. 8:1-3).
- God will also appoint watchmen who will remind the Lord day and night about His covenant promises to Israel and God will respond by making Jerusalem a praise in the earth (Isa. 62:6-7).
- Perhaps the greatest thing that will happen in the end times is found in Revelation 22:17. John wrote, “The Spirit and the bride say,
‘Come.’” This is a simple verse with powerful implications. The global Church, functioning fully in her bridal identity and in complete agreement with the Holy Spirit, will be so in love with Jesus and will so long for His return that she will invite Him back to earth as her Bridegroom.

The Day of the Lord will be great because God will make the Church glorious, the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all nations, the greatest harvest in history will be reaped, Israel will be restored and saved, and the global worship and prayer movement will prepare the way for the Lord’s return.

Notes

2. Webster’s New World Dictionary & Thesaurus, s.v. “passion.”
5. Ibid.
Review Questions

True or False

____ 1. The gospel of the kingdom is the good news that Jesus died for our sins.

____ 2. The global worship and prayer movement will prepare the way for the return of the Lord.

____ 3. The Church will not be glorious until Jesus returns.

____ 4. Because the Day of the Lord will be so terrible, there is not much reason for optimism about the end times.

____ 5. The greatest harvest in history will be reaped just prior to the Great Tribulation.

____ 6. People who teach that the Church will do the same works that Jesus did misinterpret John 14:12.

____ 7. Christ-likeness and holiness are synonymous.

Fill in the Blank

8. The glorious end-time Church will be ______________, ______________, and ______________.

9. The end-time harvest includes the Church coming to ______ ________ as Christ-like ______.

10. Israel will be ____________ and all Israel will be ____________.

11. The global worship and prayer movement will fill the earth and ______ ___ _____ _______ for the Lord’s return.

12. John saw a great multitude that will be saved during the __________ ____________.

13. The __________ ___ _____ _____________ must be preached in all nations before Jesus returns.

14. The _________ and _________ displayed in the book of Acts, the _________ and _________ of Elijah, and the _________ of Moses will be released into the earth before the Lord returns.
Prophetic Vision for the End Times

Matching (Place the letter of the correct answer in the blank space)

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<th>15. Scripture verse(s) that describe(s) how the Church will release justice to the earth.</th>
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<td>16. Scripture verse(s) that reveal(s) how the Church will invite Jesus back to earth.</td>
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<td>17. Scripture verse(s) that describe(s) the great and terrible Day of the Lord.</td>
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<td>18. Scripture verse(s) that reveal(s) how the Church will be purified in the end times.</td>
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<td>20. Scripture verse(s) that describe(s) the glorious end-time Church.</td>
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Possible Matches for 15-20

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An Overview of the Terrible Day of the Lord

1. The Day of the Lord is described as both great and terrible.

- The Day of the Lord refers to the positive and negative events that will intensify in the final three-and-a-half years before Jesus returns.
- The Day of the Lord is described as both great and terrible. Notice these verses:

  > For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11, NKJV).

  > I will send you Elijah...before...the great and dreadful day of the LORD (Mal. 4:5, NKJV).

- The Day of the Lord will involve two vastly different extremes.
- It will be a great day for believers because they will experience the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit in history (Joel 2:28-32). We looked at the Great
Day of the Lord in the last session.

- It will be a very terrible day to the rebellious who will witness the most severe outpouring of God’s judgments ever seen (Rev. 6-20). We will look at the Terrible Day of the Lord in this session.

We need to maintain a proper view of the Day of the Lord. We must be careful not to be too negative or too positive. The Day of the Lord will be the best of times and the worst of times.

2. There are numerous Scriptures that describe the Terrible Day of the Lord.

- Notice some verses that refer to this period:

  Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty....Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it....Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold and mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of the LORD of hosts in the day of His burning anger (Isa. 13:6-13).

  Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty (Joel 1:15).

  Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision (Joel 3:14).

  For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head (Obad. 15).

  For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2).

- In Scripture, the Terrible Day of the Lord is referred to in many different ways. This prophetic timeframe is referred to as:

  - The Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14);
  - A time of distress (Dan. 12:1);
  - The Great Day of God (Rev. 16:14);
  - That day (Isa. 2:11, 17);
  - The day of His burning anger (Isa. 13:13; Zeph. 2:2);
The great day of their wrath (Rev. 6:16-17);
A day of reckoning (Isa. 2:12);
The day of vengeance (Isa. 34:8; 61:2; 63:4; Luke 21:22);
42 months (Rev. 11:2; 13:5);
1,260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6);
Time, times, and half a time (Rev. 12:14; Dan. 7:25; 12:7);
The middle of the week (Dan. 9:27);
Jacob’s Trouble (Jer. 30:7).

- Summarizing these verses, the Terrible Day of the Lord is:
  - A day of destruction from the Almighty;
  - A day of terror and retribution on the ungodly;
  - A day of reckoning for the proud and arrogant;
  - A day of decision for the nations to align themselves with God’s covenant purposes;
  - A day of judgment on idolatry, spiritual harlotry, pride, independence, and all forms of evil;
  - A day of vengeance when Jesus arises as a warrior King to destroy the enemies of God.

3. The Terrible Day of the Lord will be the worst time in history for the rebellious who refuse to surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

- The Day of the Lord will be a “very terrible” day for the rebellious who will witness the most severe outpouring of God’s judgments ever seen (Rev. 6-20). Jesus’ judgments will shake all that can be shaken (Hag. 2:6-8; Heb. 12:26).
- The Antichrist’s evil worldwide empire will conquer and subdue the nations (Rev. 13) while God’s judgments remove everything hindering His kingdom rule (Rev. 6; 8-9; 16-19).
- Jesus said, “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short” (Matt. 24:21-22).
- The Terrible Day of the Lord will be so intense that unless the Lord decided to shorten its duration, no one would survive that period of time.

4. The Terrible Day of the Lord will involve pressure from four sources.

- The wrath of God
  - The wrath of God will be poured out on the rebellious through the most severe judgments in history (Rev. 6-20).
  - The Bible says that the “wrath of God” will be “poured out full strength” (Rev. 14:10, NKJV).
- The rage of Satan
  - The devil, who presently occupies a throne in the second heavens, will be evicted and thrown down to the earth.
  - John described this when he wrote, “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time” (Rev. 12:12).
  - Satan will persecute the saints through the Antichrist’s reign of terror (Dan. 7:19-26; Rev. 12-13).

- The fullness of sin
  - Sin will reach heights never before seen (Rev. 9:21; 14:18-20; 17:5; 18:5; Dan. 8:23; 12:10).
  - John pointed out that the cup of iniquity will be full in the end times (Rev. 17:4).
  - Daniel prophesied that the Antichrist will not rise up until “the transgressors have reached their fullness” (Dan. 8:23). He also said that “the wicked shall do wickedly” (Dan. 12:10, NKJV).
  - The particular sins that will reach fullness in the end times are “murders...sorceries...immorality...thefts” (Rev. 9:21).

- The worst natural disasters in history
  - Speaking about the end times, Isaiah prophesied that “the earth is broken asunder, the earth is split through, the earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard and it totters like a shack, for its transgression is heavy upon it” ( Isa. 24:19-20).
  - Jesus said that “there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines....and on the earth dismay among the nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves” (Luke 21:11, 25).
  - Looking prophetically at the end of the age, John saw:

    A great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty....And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe (Rev. 16:18-21).

5. The Terrible Day of the Lord will result in approximately half of the world’s population dying prematurely.
   - During the Terrible Day of the Lord, there will be two severe waves of death.
The first wave will kill one-fourth of the earth’s population:

I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth (Rev. 6:8).

The second wave will kill an additional one-third of mankind:

And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind (Rev. 9:15).

These two severe waves of death will kill approximately fifty percent of the world’s population.

Let’s put this into perspective. The world population is projected to cross the seven billion mark in 2013, the eight billion mark in 2028, and the nine billion mark in 2054. Just imagine if these waves of death struck in the year 2028. The result would be four billion people dying a premature death.

An Overview of the End-Time Judgments

1. **If God’s kingdom is coming to the earth in fullness, then whatever is hindering this from happening must be removed.**

   - Haggai prophesied, “Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory [the Jerusalem Temple where Jesus will reign as King]” (Hag. 2:6-7).
   - As Jesus prepares to return and establish His kingdom on the earth, He will remove everything that hinders His rule. He will shake the heavens and the earth so that every obstacle that opposes His lordship is taken out of the way.
   - Though the Lord delights in mercy, the day of His vengeance must come for a short season to remove everything hindering His kingdom from coming in fullness. And make no mistake about it—as God’s kingdom begins to come in fullness, there will be an unprecedented upheaval in the earth. The kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light will clash like never before in history.
   - Before Jesus returns, He will shake every created institution. He will shake governments and kingdoms. He will disturb financial systems, religious systems, and weather patterns. He will disrupt economic systems, the entertainment industry, transportation systems, and the sporting world. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken.
   - The powers of darkness that rule in the heavens will be judged. Jesus will remove everything that stands in the way of His kingdom from
coming in fullness to the earth.

2. **The Old Testament prophets spoke about God’s end-time judgments.**

- Isaiah prophesied, “For the LORD will execute judgment by fire and by His sword on all flesh, and those slain by the LORD will be many” (Isa. 66:16).
- Zephaniah prophesied, “Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all My burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal” (Zeph. 3:8).
- God has vowed to “execute judgment by fire” and “to pour out” on the nations His “indignation” and “burning anger.”
- All of the earth will be devoured by the fire of God’s zeal and “those slain by the Lord will be many.”
- We have to understand that God—not the devil—will kill many people in the end times as a result of His judgments.
- Isaiah prophesied further about God’s end-time judgments:

  Behold, the LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants....The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away....The new wine mourns, the vine decays, all the merry-hearted sigh. The gaiety of tambourines ceases, the noise of revelers stops, the gaiety of the harp ceases....All joy turns to gloom. The gaiety of the earth is banished....For thus it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive tree, as the gleanings when the grape harvest is over (Isa. 24:1-13).

- Notice that the Lord—not the devil—“lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants.”
- In the end times, many believers will be trying to rebuke the devil and to bind demons in order to end the destruction that is coming upon the earth. However, we have to understand that it is Jesus who will release judgments that will cleanse the earth of sin, defilement, and impurities in order to prepare the way for the kingdom of God to come in fullness to the earth.

3. **Jesus said that His return would be just like the days of Noah.**

- While teaching the disciples about the end times, Jesus said:

  For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of
the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left (Matt 24:37-41).

- Before Jesus returns, the nations will be consumed with pursuing pleasure. They will not realize that severe judgments are about to be released from heaven.
- The Lord said that the nations would be “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” The point is not to condemn eating, drinking, or marriage. It is to emphasize that the nations will be at ease right before the Lord returns—completely oblivious to the destruction that is just over the horizon.
- The “coming of the Son of Man” will be just like in the days of Noah when “the flood came and took them all away.”
- What was the flood? It was God’s judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth because “the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and...every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). The Lord told Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth” (Gen. 6:13).
- The flood was God’s global judgment upon the inhabitants of the world for their brazen iniquity, violence, immorality, idolatry, and rebellion.
- In the same way, right before the Lord returns, God will once again release global judgments that will purge the earth of sin, immorality, and impurity.

The End-Time Judgments in the Book of Revelation

1. The book of Revelation reveals the heavenly coronation of Jesus, when He receives the title-deed to the earth and releases the judgments of God.

   - When the Apostle John was taken into the throne room, he saw the heavenly coronation of Jesus as the eternal King over all the earth. He wrote:

     I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.” And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and
seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne (Rev. 5:1-7).

- In one of the most important and dramatic events in the Bible, John was able to look into the future to see Jesus’ coronation as the eternal King.
- John sees Jesus as an overcoming Jewish man in all of His glory. He described Jesus as "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David."
- As David’s greatest son, Jesus will receive the right to rule the earth and to bring Israel into her greatest time of prophetic fulfillment.
- As the King of Israel, Jesus is returning to Jerusalem to sit on “the throne of His father David” and to “reign over the house of Jacob forever” (Luke 1:32-33).
- Daniel saw the same heavenly coronation of Jesus hundreds of years before John:

  One like the Son of Man [Jesus]...came to the Ancient of Days [the Father]....To Him [Jesus] was given...a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him....His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve Him” (Dan. 7:13-14, 27, NKJV).

- Sometime in the future, when Jesus receives the kingdom, He will take “the book out of the right hand” of the Father. This book is the title-deed to the earth and it contains the action plan required to reap the two harvests—the harvest of salvation and the harvest of judgment. As this book is opened, it will cleanse the earth and prepare the way for Jesus’ second coming.
- Jesus will take this book, which is in the form of a seven-sealed scroll, and break it open one seal at a time. Each time a seal is broken, a significant prophetic event will take place that will prepare the earth for the fullness of God’s kingdom (see Rev. 6).

2. The book of Revelation reveals that Jesus will release twenty-one judgments that will prepare the way for His return.

- The most important thing to keep in mind about the judgments of God is that Jesus is the One who is releasing them to the earth.
- The Lamb of God, the One who was slain for our sins, is the One who is releasing twenty-one judgments to the earth to prepare the way for His second coming.
- Jesus is the only one worthy, deserving, and capable to administrate and release these judgments to the earth.
- These judgments are contained in three series of seven judgments and take the form of seven seals (Rev. 6), seven trumpets (Rev. 8-9), and seven bowls of wrath (Rev. 15-16).
- The three numbered judgments series are literal, future, chronological, progressive, redemptive, and relevant.
- **Literal**: They can’t be explained away symbolically.
- **Future**: They have not been fulfilled in history.
- **Chronological**: They unfold one after the other. The seals release the trumpets and the trumpets release the bowls.
- **Progressive**: They increase in intensity. The seven seals are surpassed in severity by the seven trumpets and the seven trumpets are surpassed in severity by the seven bowls of wrath. For example, the seven seals result in one-fourth of the earth dying (Rev. 6:8) while the seven trumpets result in one-third of the earth dying (Rev. 9:15). The seven bowls of wrath release the fullness of God’s judgments as the “wrath of God...is poured out full strength” (Rev. 14:10, NKJV).
- **Redemptive**: These judgments will purify the Church (Dan. 12:10), lead unbelievers to faith in Christ (Rev. 7:9-17), destroy the Antichrist’s regime of darkness (Rev. 16), remove everything that hinders God’s kingdom from coming to the earth in fullness (Rev. 11:15-18), and will prepare the earth for the millennial reign of Christ (Rev. 20).
- **Relevant**: These judgments will be released by Jesus in partnership with the praying Church (Rev. 5:8; 8:1-6).

- Jesus will release these judgments to purge the earth and to prepare it for His kingdom to come in fullness.
- Notice how these judgments prepare the way for the Lord’s kingdom to come in fullness to the earth:

  Then the seventh angel sounded [the seventh trumpet judgment]; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

- Just as God brought Israel into the Promised Land by releasing judgments upon Egypt, He will also bring His people into the Millennial Kingdom by releasing judgments upon the Antichrist and his empire.

### 3. The seven seals are the first series of judgments that will be released in the end times.

- The seven-seal judgments are released as Jesus breaks the seals that protect the scroll.
- These judgments include:
  - A world war in which one-fourth of the earth dies (Rev. 6:3-4; 6:7-8);
  - A world-wide famine and economic crisis (Rev. 6:5-6);
  - An outbreak of pestilence and disease (Rev. 6:8);
  - A prayer by the martyrs for God’s justice on the unrighteous, resulting in the judgments intensifying as seen in the trumpets and bowls (Rev. 6:9-11);
  - A great earthquake and cosmic disturbances (Rev. 6:12-17).
When Jesus breaks the seventh seal, there will be silence in heaven for about half-an-hour. After this silence, the seven-trumpet judgments will be released (Rev. 8:1-2). Thus, the seven-seal judgments lead to the seven-trumpet judgments as these judgments increase in severity and intensity.

4. The seven trumpets are the second series of judgments that will be released in the end times.

- The seven-trumpet judgments are initiated after Jesus breaks the seventh seal.
- The seven-trumpet judgments are more severe and intense than the seven seals.
- Just as trumpets in the Bible warned of impending danger and called people to prayer, these trumpets are a warning of what is about to come upon the earth so that the righteous will rally to the place of prayer.
- These judgments include:
  - A third of the earth’s vegetation burned, affecting the food supply (Rev. 8:7);
  - A third of the sea, sea-life, and ships destroyed, affecting the food supply and commerce (Rev. 8:8);
  - A third of the earth’s water poisoned, affecting the water supply and resulting in many premature deaths (Rev. 8:10-11);
  - A third of the earth’s light darkened (Rev. 8:12);
  - Demons released to torment unbelievers for five months (Rev. 9:1-12);
  - Demons released to kill one-third of mankind (Rev. 9:13-21).

The seventh trumpet blast is one of the most dramatic sections in the book of Revelation. It reveals that God’s kingdom is coming to the earth in fullness. This helps us understand why God’s judgments are so severe.

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth” (Rev. 11:15-18).
5. The seven bowls are the third and final series of judgments that will be released in the end times.

- The seven-bowl judgments are initiated after the seventh trumpet blast.
- The seven-bowl judgments are more severe and intense than the seven trumpets.
- The seven-bowl judgments are poured out in full measure without delay, hindrance, or mercy. The seven bowls are the "wrath of God, which is poured out full strength" (Rev. 14:10, NKJV).
- These judgments include:
  - Painful sores released upon the worshipers of the Antichrist (Rev. 16:2);
  - Everything in the sea destroyed, severely damaging the food supply and commerce (Rev. 16:3);
  - All fresh water turned to blood in retribution for killing God’s people (Rev. 16:4-7);
  - The sun’s heat becoming so intense that it scorches men with fire and fierce heat (Rev. 16:8-9);
  - The Antichrist’s empire darkened and his followers tormented with pain (Rev. 16:10-11);
  - Demons luring the nations to Armageddon to fight against Christ and His army (Rev. 16:12-16);
  - The worst earthquake in history released, destroying Babylon and many cities around the world (Rev. 16:17-21).

- After the seventh bowl judgment is released, notice how heaven rejoices over God’s righteous judgments:

  After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality [the great harlot is Babylon, which is the economic, religious, and political headquarters of the Antichrist (Rev. 17-18)], and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER. And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER.” And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, “Amen. Hallelujah...For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns” (Rev. 19:1-6).
The Purpose of God’s End-Time Judgments

1. **God has a purpose in releasing these end-time judgments to the earth.**

   - Describing the principle of God’s redemptive judgments, Mike Bickle wrote:
     
     God uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love without violating anyone’s free will in training the rulers of the earth.\(^2\)
   
   - The Father wants as many people as possible to be His sons and to rule the nations with Christ. Because of His jealousy, the Father will use the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people. John saw “a great multitude which no one could count...clothed in white robes” worshiping at the throne of God (Rev. 7:9). This multitude of worshipers “are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).
   
   - A great multitude, possibly as many as two billion, will be saved and purified during the Great Tribulation when God’s judgments are released.
   
   - Not only will countless people be saved, they will also come to the deepest level of love. Jesus prayed that His people would love Him just like the Father loves Him (John 17:26). The end-time judgments will produce passionate lovers who have made themselves ready as a worthy Bride for Jesus (Rev. 19:7).
   
   - The Bible makes it clear that the Bride will not be fully ready until the harlot Babylon has been destroyed by the judgments of God (Rev. 18-19).
   
   - Describing the end times, Daniel said that “many will be purged, purified and refined” (Dan. 12:10). The intense pressure that will come upon the earth when God’s judgments are released will purify the Bride of Christ and make her ready for the Millennial Kingdom and for eternity.
   
   - In addition to this, God is training the future rulers of the earth. The faithful saints will rule and reign with Christ during the Millennial Kingdom and for all eternity (Rev. 20:6). God’s end-time judgments will prepare the Church to rule the earth with Christ in the same way that Saul’s persecution of David prepared him to be king over Israel.

2. **In summary, some of the purposes of God’s end-time judgments are to:**

   - Purify the Church (Dan. 12:10; Rev. 19:7-8);
   - Create a deep yearning in the Bride for Jesus to come (Rev. 22:17);
   - Prepare the Church to rule and reign with Christ (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21);
   - Lead as many as possible to faith in Christ (Rev. 7:9-17);
- Bring salvation to Israel (Rev. 7:1-8);
- Destroy the Antichrist’s regime of darkness (Rev. 16);
- Remove everything that hinders God’s kingdom from coming to the earth in fullness (Rev. 11:15-18);
- Prepare the earth for the millennial reign of Christ (Rev. 20);
- Lead the rebellious to repentance (Rev. 9:20-21; Rev. 16:8-9);
- Inspire deep worship (Rev. 14:7; 15:3-4; 19:1-6);
- Judge sin, wickedness, and rebellion (Obed. 15);
- Force Satan to let God’s people go so that they can worship Him—just like what happened when God delivered Israel from Pharaoh (Ex. 7-10).

3. If we don’t understand God’s end-time judgments then we could easily become offended at God.

- Speaking of the end times, Jesus said that “many will be offended” (Matt. 24:10-11).
- Many people will be offended because they do not understand the purpose of God’s end-time judgments.
- They will question God’s integrity and faithfulness, wondering why a God of love will allow so much suffering, destruction, and hardship.
- If we don’t understand God’s redemptive purposes in releasing these twenty-one judgments, then we could easily become offended at God.
- Jesus said, “Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me” (Matt. 11:5-6, NKJV).

Even though the Day of the Lord will be very terrible, God promises to protect the faithful saints from the “the hour of testing” that is coming upon the earth (Rev. 3:10). As we abandon ourselves to the Lord and dedicate ourselves to advancing His kingdom, we can be confident in His promise to protect us from the great shakings that will test the earth in the end times.

Notes
Review Questions

True or False

_____ 1. Another name for the Day of the Lord is the day of vengeance.

_____ 2. The Day of the Lord is a time when God’s mercy is released to those who are undeserving.

_____ 3. The Day of the Lord is a time when God’s wrath will be poured out in full measure.

_____ 4. During the Day of the Lord a third of the earth will die a premature death.

_____ 5. Jesus is too nice, sweet, and kind to release judgments on the ungodly.

_____ 6. Jesus will release 25 judgments in the end times.

_____ 7. The main reason why God’s judgments are being released is to prepare the way for His kingdom to come to earth in fullness.

_____ 8. The judgments described in the book of Revelation are symbolic and were fulfilled in 70 A.D.

Fill in the Blank

9. The Day of the Lord will be a ______ ________ day for the rebellious who will witness the most severe outpouring of God’s _______ ever seen.

10. The Terrible Day of the Lord will result in approximately ______ of the world’s population dying prematurely.

11. _______ that can be _______ will be ________.

12. Jesus said that His return would be just like the days of ________.

13. The _______ _______ are the first series of judgments that will be released in the end times.

14. The _______ _______ are the second series of judgments that will be released in the end times.
15. The __________ __________ are the third and final series of judgments that will be released in the end times.

Identify five descriptions of the three numbered judgments in the book of Revelation from the list on the right and place the correct letters in the spaces next to questions 16 through 20.

16. ____
17. ____
18. ____
19. ____
20. ____

Possible Matches for 16-20

a. Symbolic
b. Literal
c. Future
d. Fulfilled
e. Progressive
f. Irrelevant
g. Complicated
h. Chronological
i. Redemptive
The Second Coming

An Overview of the Second Coming

1. Jesus is coming back to establish His kingdom on the earth.

   - When many people think about the second coming, they imagine Jesus returning for His Church and taking her to heaven, where they will live forever.
   - However, this is not what Scripture teaches about the second coming. Jesus is returning to establish His kingdom on the earth. Notice these Scriptures:

     I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

     In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the
east....And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one (Zech. 14:4-9).

He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth (Zech. 9:10).

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him (Matt. 25:31-32).

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him [on the earth] for a thousand years (Rev. 20:6).

- The ultimate prophetic theme of the end times is Jesus’ second coming to establish His kingdom on the earth. This time of prophetic fulfillment is known as the Messianic Age, the Kingdom Age, or the Millennial Kingdom. It is the time when Jesus will reign as King from Jerusalem for a thousand years (Zech. 14:16; Rev. 20:4).

2. When Jesus returns, the entire world will be in utter chaos.

- Speaking of the end times, Isaiah said, “Darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples” (Isa. 60:2).
- Right before the Lord returns, the greatest darkness in history will cover the earth—affecting billions of people.
- Two severe waves of death will kill half of the world’s population (Rev. 6:8; Rev. 9:15). This could be as a high, or even higher, than four billion people.
- Massive natural disasters will disrupt life as we know it today. In fact, the Bible states that the worst earthquakes in history will occur right before Jesus returns (Rev. 6:12-17; Rev. 16:17-21).
- The stars will fall from the sky (Rev. 6:13), the mountains and islands will be moved from their places (Rev. 6:14), the sun and moon will be darkened (Rev. 8:12), demons will torment mankind for five months (Rev. 9:1-12), and the earth’s water supply will be poisoned (Rev. 8:10-11; Rev. 16:4-7).
- Disease, pestilence, and famine will break out all across the world (Rev. 6:5-6, 8).
- This unfathomable upheaval in the earth will create economic chaos beyond imagination (Rev. 18:11-17).
- Lawlessness will reach heights never before seen (Matt. 24:12), resulting in unprecedented acts of sexual immorality, perversion, homosexuality, idolatry, murder, theft, and sorcery (Rev. 9:20-21).
- The Antichrist—who will be the most ruthless, cruel, and evil dictator in history—will conquer the world and force the people of the earth to worship him (Rev. 13:1-8). He will require that people in all nations
take the mark of the beast in order to buy or sell anything (Rev. 13:16-18). From God's perspective, this mark will be a sign that people have entered into a covenant with Satan and it will seal their eternal fate in hell (Rev. 14:9-11).

- Israel will go through the most severe trials in the nation’s history—even surpassing the holocaust (Dan. 12:1). The Bible says that two-thirds of the nation will die (Zech. 13:8). The Antichrist’s coalition of nations will attack Jerusalem, capture the city, and kill many Jewish people (Zech. 14:2). Then the nations will trample upon Jerusalem, just like the Bible predicts (Rev. 11:2).
- This persecution will not just be limited to Israel and the Jews. The Antichrist and his regime will also kill more Christians than at any other time history (Rev. 6:9-11; 13:7).

3. Jesus will return in power and great glory.

- Although the world will be in utter chaos and deep darkness, Jesus will return in power and great glory (Matt. 24:30).
- When John saw Jesus he fell down as a dead man. John, the one who walked closer to Jesus than anyone else, was so overwhelmed by the resurrected and glorified Son of God that he collapsed under the weight of His glory (Rev. 1:17).
- Jesus' face shines like the sun in its strength. He has a sharp two-edged sword coming out of His mouth. And He is the Lion of Judah who triumphed over all of the works of Satan on the cross (Rev. 1:12-18; Rev. 5:1-5).
- When Jesus returns, the unimaginable weight of His glory will make the sun grow dim and the moon dark as He reigns from Jerusalem (Isa. 24:23). At His coming, He will strike down the nations with the sword of His mouth and rule the earth with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15).
- Notice some verses that describe how Jesus will return in power and great glory:

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30).

For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS (Matt. 16:27).

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne (Matt. 25:31).

The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thess. 1:7-8).
There is no doubt about it. When Jesus returns, He will come in power and great glory.

4. **Jesus is returning as a Warrior King to destroy God’s enemies.**

- Not only is Jesus returning with power and great glory, but He is coming as a Warrior King to destroy God’s enemies.
- Jesus is coming to crush the Antichrist—the cruelest and most ruthless dictator in history—with the mere breath of His lips (2 Thess. 2:8). Jesus is coming to vanquish God’s enemies, to establish His kingdom, and to rule the nations from Jerusalem.
- Jesus is the captain of Heaven’s armies—the Lord of Hosts. He is a mighty warrior dressed for battle who is returning to make war with the ungodly.
- Notice how the Bible describes Jesus as a Warrior King at the time of His second coming:

> And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:11-16).

- Make no mistake about it—Jesus is returning as a Warrior King to take over this planet and to establish His kingdom in Jerusalem. As a Warrior King, Jesus will destroy everything that opposes His kingdom rule.
- Notice carefully that John saw the Lord “clothed with a robe dipped in blood.” This is not the blood that Jesus shed on the cross when He gave His life as a ransom for many. Rather, it is the blood of His enemies that will be spilled when He executes them in His wrath. Those who refuse His amazing love, tender mercy, and eternal salvation will be destroyed by Jesus when He returns.
- In light of this concept, notice how Isaiah described Jesus at the time of His second coming:

> Who is this who comes from Edom [Jordan], with garments of glowing colors from Bozrah [Jordan], this One who is majestic in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength? “It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? “I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My
anger and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come. I looked, and there was no one to help, and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; so My own arm brought salvation to Me, and My wrath upheld Me. I trod down the peoples in My anger and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth” (Isa. 63:1-6).

- From these verses, we see that Jesus will:
  - Wage war against His enemies;
  - Tread the winepress of God’s wrath;
  - Destroy His enemies to such an extent that His garments will be stained with blood;
  - Execute God’s vengeance on the nations.

- This revelation of the Messiah as a Warrior King was such a shock to Isaiah that he asked, “Who is this? Why are your garments stained red?” Isaiah was familiar with the Messiah suffering as a sacrificial Lamb to bring salvation to the world (Isa. 53). But the revelation of the Messiah as a Warrior King covered in the blood of His enemies took Isaiah completely off guard.

- In the same way, many in the Body of Christ do not like hearing about Jesus as a Warrior King. They want a Jesus who is meek and gentle. However, this revelation of Jesus is important for us to understand and to accept—especially as we progress deeper into the end times.

5. Jesus is returning with the faithful saints throughout history.

- Notice these verses that describe the faithful saints returning to the earth with Jesus:

  These [the Antichrist and his armies] will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

  And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses (Rev. 19:14).

  Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You (Zech. 14:5, NKJV).

  Lift up a banner on the high mountain, raise your voice to them; wave your hand, that they may enter the gates of the nobles. I have commanded My sanctified ones; I have also called My mighty ones for My anger—those who rejoice in My exaltation. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like that
of many people! A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations
gathered together! The LORD of hosts musters the army for
battle. They come from a far country, from the end of
heaven—the LORD and His weapons of indignation, to destroy
the whole land (Isa. 13:2-5, NKJV).

- When Jesus returns, the faithful saints throughout history will return
  with Him and together they execute the Lord’s vengeance upon the
  nations.

The Battle of Armageddon

1. The Battle of Armageddon is a climatic event of the Day of the Lord.
   - The Battle of Armageddon is described in the following verses:

   And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of
   the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false
   prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of
demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the
whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great
day of God, the Almighty....And they gathered them together
to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon (Rev.
16:13-16).

   - The “kings of the whole world” are lured to the Battle of Armageddon
     by demons. These demonic powers gather them together “for the war
     of the great day of God, the Almighty.”

   - In this verse, the great day of God is another description of the great
     and terrible Day of the Lord.

   - The Antichrist and his armies, along with the other kings of the earth
     and their armies, will engage in direct combat with Jesus and His army
     of saints and angels. This will be the culminating event of the three-
     and-a-half year period known as the Day of the Lord.

   - Notice that these armies gathered “together to the place which in He-
     brew is called Har-Magedon.”

   - The Gentile believers in the churches of Asia Minor, to whom the book
     of Revelation was written, needed John to interpret Hebrew words for
     them (Rev. 9:11). In Hebrew, har means “hill-country.” Thus, Har
     Magedon is the “hill-country of Megiddo.”

   - Megiddo is an Israeli town in the valley of Esdraelon, which is in the
     Plain of Jezreel. The plain of Megiddo is the military staging zone for
     this war to end all wars.

2. Whoever wins the Battle of Armageddon will control Jerusalem, the
destiny of Israel, and will establish who will be worshiped in the
earth.
   - Although there has always been a battle for Jerusalem throughout
history, the struggle over who will control Jerusalem reached an entirely new level when Israel became a nation in 1948.

- The battle for Jerusalem is the core issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- Since 1948, Israel has been involved in several wars with the Arabs, including the 1948 War of Independence, the Six-Day War of 1967, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
- The Arabs do not want peace with Israel; they want to wipe out the Jewish nation and recapture Jerusalem for Allah.
- Understanding the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the reason why Jerusalem is central to this war helps us fully understand the Battle of Armageddon.
- The battle for Jerusalem will go to a completely new level before the Lord returns. Eventually, all the nations of the earth will attack Jerusalem in an effort to control this strategic city (Zech. 12:1-3; Zech. 14:2).
- The Battle of Armageddon will be the final and decisive battle in the war for Jerusalem. Whoever wins the Battle of Armageddon will control Jerusalem and the destiny of Israel. More importantly, as we saw in Session 2, this battle will determine who will be worshiped in the earth.

3. Jesus and His army of saints and angels easily win the Battle of Armageddon.

- At the second coming, Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives. Zechariah prophesied,

  In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south (Zech. 14:4).

- Following this, “The LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle” (Zech. 14:3).
- John shows us how easily Jesus defeats the armies of the nations at His second coming:

  Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.” And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his im-
age; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh (Rev. 19:11-21).

- Jesus the Warrior King will send a “great panic” upon the nations gathered together at the Battle of Armageddon. As a result, these armies will fight one another (Zech. 14:12-13).
- After Jesus and His army wins this battle, Jerusalem will be eternally secured, Israel will became a mighty nation, and Jesus will be worshiped as the King of the earth.

The Judgment of the Nations

1. After the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus will gather the survivors from the nations to Jerusalem in order to evaluate their role in His kingdom.

   - After the Battle of Armageddon, there will be three types of people on the earth. These are:
     - The redeemed
     - The reprobate
     - The resisters

Familiarizing yourself with these three groups of people will help you understand the judgment of the nations with much greater clarity.

- The redeemed are the born-again believers with glorified bodies who return with Jesus and will reign with Christ for a thousand years.
  - Before the Lord returns, many believers will be martyred for their faith in Christ (Rev. 13:6, 10).
  - However, there will be many believers who survive the end-time shakings. When Jesus returns, these will be caught up (raptured) to Him in the sky (Matt. 24:29-31).
  - The overcoming believers—including those who survive the end-time shakings and the faithful saints throughout history—will receive glorified bodies and will return with Jesus to reign with Him for one-thousand years (Rev. 20:4, 6).

- The reprobate are those who took the mark of the beast but are still alive after the Battle of Armageddon.
Recall that the Antichrist will attempt to force everyone to take the mark of the beast and to worship him (Rev. 13:16-17).
Those who refuse this mark will not be able to buy or sell (Rev. 13:16-17).
God says that whoever takes this mark will be sentenced to hell for eternity (Rev. 14:9-11).
Not every person who received the mark of the beast will die in the Battle of Armageddon or during the Tribulation.
There were will be reprobates alive after the Battle of Armageddon.

- The *resistors* are unbelievers who refused the mark of the beast and are still alive after the Battle of Armageddon.

- The Bible says, "Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths" (Zech. 14:16).
- When Zechariah says "any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem," he is referring to a coalition of nations that will attack Jerusalem in the end times, as described in Zechariah 14. The resistors will not personally come against Israel; it will be their nations who attack Israel.
- As Scripture indicates, there will be unbelievers who make it into the Millennial Kingdom.
- These people are the resistors. They will be like the resistors during WWII. These resistors did not resist the Nazi regime because they were born-again believers, but because they hated what the Third Reich stood for.

- After Jesus wins the Battle of Armageddon, He will gather to Jerusalem those who survived the end-time shakings in order to evaluate their role in His kingdom.
- From our previous discussion, we know that these survivors will include both the reprobate and the resistors. As a side note, the redeemed will have already been evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) and will not be evaluated at the judgment of the nations.
- Jesus described this scenario for us in the parable of the sheep and the goats when He said, "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory [the second coming], and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne [in Jerusalem after the Battle of Armageddon]. All the nations [the reprobate and the resistors] will be gathered before Him" (Matt. 25:31-32).
- This lays the foundation for understanding the judgment of the nations as it is revealed in the parable of the sheep and the goats.
2. Jesus taught about the judgment of the nations in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46).

- Today, this parable has become a famous reference for mercy ministries that give to the poor, visit prisoners, and clothe the homeless.
- Though using this passage as a motivation to serve others is valid, Jesus was not referring to just anyone who had some type of physical need. His prophetic message was related primarily to a particular group of people at a specific period in time.
- Jesus referred to the people who were hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, sick, and imprisoned as “brothers of Mine” (Matt. 25:40).
- Who are the Lord’s brothers? Jesus said that “whoever does the will of God, he is My brother” (Mark 3:35).
- Therefore, every born-again believer is the Lord’s brother (Mark 3:35). This includes Jews and Gentiles. Also, keep in mind that all Israel will be saved by the time the judgment of the nations takes place (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:26).
- Furthermore, by examining Joel 3:1-3—an Old Testament prophecy that describes the exact scenario pictured by Jesus in Matthew 25—we learn more details about the judgment of the nations.
- Notice the following parallels between Joel 3:1-3 and Matt. 25:31-46:
  - Both accounts show that this event will take place in Jerusalem (Joel 3:2; Matt. 25:31);¹
  - Both accounts show that the Lord will gather all the nations together (Joel 3:2; Matt. 25:32);
  - Both accounts show that the Lord will enter into judgment with the nations (Joel 3:2; Matt. 25:32-46).
- There is only one judgment of the nations at the end of the age—not two.
- Now, looking at Joel 3:2, notice why the Lord enters into judgment with the nations. He says that it is based upon “My people and My inheritance, Israel.” Specifically, the Lord said that He would judge the nations because they have driven the Jews out of Israel and “they have divided up My land.”
- In Zechariah 2:8, the Lord referred to the Jewish people as the apple of His eye. The apple of the eye is the pupil—one of the most sensitive parts of the body. It symbolizes something or someone that is deeply cherished and highly valued.
- Israel and the Jews are sensitive subjects to the Lord; He treasures them both deeply. That is why blessing the Jewish nation blesses His heart and will secure blessings for the nations.
- Putting Joel 3:1-3 together with Matthew 25:31-46, we see that the nations will be judged for how they treated the nation of Israel, the Jewish people, and Gentile believers.
- At the judgment of the nations, keep in mind that Jesus will send every reprobate who took the mark of the beast “into eternal punishment” (Matt. 25:46).
- His standard of judgment for the resisters, however, will be based
upon how they dealt with Israel and how they treated Jews and Christians during the Tribulation.

- Recall that Jesus described His Jewish and Gentile brethren as hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, sick, and imprisoned. This describes how Jews and Christians will be treated by the Antichrist and his regime at the end of the age.

3. **At the judgment of the nations, Jesus will permit those who blessed Jews and Christians in the end times to live in the Millennial Kingdom.**

- Jesus said, “To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me” (Matt. 25:40).
- By this statement, Jesus revealed that blessing Jews and Christians through basic charitable deeds such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, ministering to the sick, and visiting the prisoners blesses His heart.
- The way the nations respond to God’s people ultimately makes its way back to God.
- Notice what Jesus says to those who bless Jews and Christians at the end of the age: “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34).
- By caring for Jews and Christians in their hour of need during the Tribulation, people will secure a place in the Millennial Kingdom.

4. **At the judgment of the nations, Jesus will sentence those who cursed Jews and Christians in the end times to hell for all eternity.**

- Jesus will tell those who did nothing for His Jewish and Gentile brothers in their distress, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41).
- Jesus said that the goats or the “accursed ones” are those who showed no compassion, care, or love for Jews and Christians in their time of tribulation.
- These accursed people did not necessarily persecute Jews or Christians; they simply remained indifferent.

As we contemplate the Battle of Armageddon and the judgment of the nations, now is the time for us to wake up and seek God like never before. During John’s description of the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus interrupted his message to urge the Church to wake up and to walk in purity (Rev. 16:15). We should heed this warning as well. Let’s stir ourselves up, overcome passivity, apathy, and slumber, and purify our hearts.
Notes

1. Joel stated that the Lord will gather the nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat, which since the fourth-century A.D. has been associated with the Kidron Valley. This valley is located between the new section of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. In Matthew 25, Jesus said that He will gather the nations when He sits on His glorious throne. Where will His throne be? It will be in Jerusalem (Jer. 3:17).
Review Questions

True or False

_____ 1. Jesus is returning to take His Bride to heaven where they will spend eternity together.

_____ 2. Jesus is returning in power and great glory to take over the earth.

_____ 3. Jesus is returning as a Warrior King to destroy God’s enemies.

_____ 4. The Battle of Armageddon is the ultimate prophetic theme of the end times.

_____ 5. When Jesus returns, the world will be in a state of peace and safety.

_____ 6. The faithful saints will return with Jesus to wage war against God’s enemies.

_____ 7. The parable of the wheat and the tares describes the judgment of the nations.

_____ 8. At the judgment of the nations, Jesus will determine who will be permitted to live in the Millennial Kingdom.

Fill in the Blank

9. The ___________ are unbelievers who refused the mark of the beast and are still alive after the Battle of Armageddon.

10. Jesus is returning with the ___________ ___________ throughout history.

11. Jesus is returning as a ___________ - _________ to destroy God’s enemies.

12. The ___________ are those who took the mark of the beast but are still alive after the Battle of Armageddon.

13. The Battle of Armageddon will be the final and decisive battle in the war for ____________.

14. Jesus will return in _________ and ________ ________.

15. The ___________ are the born-again believers with glorified bodies who return with Jesus and will reign with Christ for a thousand years.
Matching (Place the letter of the correct answer in the blank space)

16. Scripture verse(s) that describe(s) the judgment of the nations.
   
17. Scripture verse(s) that show(s) Jesus returning in power and great glory.

18. Scripture verse(s) that reveal(s) Jesus returning as a Warrior King to destroy God's enemies.

19. Scripture verse(s) that show(s) Jesus returning with the faithful saints.

20. Scripture verse(s) that reveal(s) the Battle of Armageddon.

Possible Matches for 16-20

a. Revelation 18:11-17
b. Revelation 13:6
c. Matthew 24:30
d. Revelation 16:13-16
e. Isaiah 60:2
f. Daniel 7:13-14
g. Revelation 14:9-11
h. Matthew 25:31-46
i. Revelation 17:14
j. Isaiah 63:1-6
Session 6

Understanding the Rapture

This session covers:

- An overview of the rapture
- A look at the rapture controversy
- The danger of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory

This session corresponds to:

- Session 6 of Prophetic Vision for the End Times CDs

An Overview of the Rapture

1. The rapture is one of the most important end-time events to understand.

- While the word rapture is not found in the Bible, this word is frequently used by teachers, preachers, and scholars to refer to the time when believers in Christ are caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
- The term rapture comes from the Latin word rapturo. This is the Latin translation of the Greek verb “caught up,” which is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.
- The concept of a rapture, where believers in Christ are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, is found in Matthew 24:29-31, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

2. Jesus introduced the rapture concept while teaching His disciples about the end times.

- Jesus first revealed that believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air in Matthew 24:29-31. Jesus said,

But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE
MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other (Matt. 24:29-31).

- In this passage, Jesus was teaching about His second coming.
- First, He described the cosmic disturbances that will take place when He returns. He said that the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the demonic powers in the heavens will be shaken.
- Second, He prophesied that every unbeliever on the earth will mourn when they see Him returning on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.
- Third, Jesus revealed for the first time the concept of a rapture. He said that the angels will be sent out with a great trumpet blast. Then the angels will gather together His people from one end of the sky to the other, implying that believers will be caught up in the air when Jesus returns.
- When will all of this take place? Jesus said plainly “immediately after the tribulation of those days.”
- As we have seen in this class, the Tribulation refers to the seven years immediately preceding the second coming of Christ. Recall our discussion in Session 2 about the three prophetic timeframes. The Tribulation begins when the Antichrist signs a peace treaty with Israel for seven years (Dan. 9:27). The Great Tribulation begins when the Antichrist breaks this treaty and commands the whole world to worship him.
- Jesus taught that the Tribulation period ends when He returns. He also revealed that the rapture will take place at His second coming—after the Great Tribulation.

3. **Paul also taught about the rapture.**

   - In Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, he wrote:

     "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be..."
caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

- First, Paul taught us that the dead in Christ (those who are asleep) will return with Jesus when He comes again.
- Second, Paul said that the people who are alive when Jesus returns will not precede those who have died. Paul is implying that the dead in Christ will receive a resurrected body at the time of their resurrection and before those who are alive at Christ’s coming (Rev. 20:4-6). Paul explicitly said that “the dead in Christ will rise first.”
- Third, Paul taught that those who are alive when Jesus returns will be caught up together with the dead in Christ—who just received resurrected bodies—to meet the Lord in the air.
- Revelation 20:4-6 makes it clear that the first resurrection of the dead takes place when Jesus returns. This reinforces the belief that the rapture of the saints takes place after the Great Tribulation.
- In Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul taught about the rapture again:

  Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 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. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God (2 Thess. 2:1-4).

- In this passage, when Paul used the phrase “our gathering together to Him,” he was referring to the rapture. How do we know? Because Paul used the Greek word episunagoge, which is derived from the word Jesus used to describe the rapture when He said, “They will gather together [episunago] His elect” (Matt. 24:31). In this passage, Paul was clearly referencing Christ’s teaching about the rapture.
- Additionally, Paul did not have to explain the rapture in detail in his second letter to the Thessalonians because he had already done so in his first letter, which we looked at previously.
- With that clarified, let’s summarize Paul’s teaching.
- First, Paul warned us not to be deceived about the coming of the Lord—including the rapture. This is a very important warning because the timing of the rapture has become such a controversial topic.
- Second, Paul said that “it” will not come unless two things happen. What is “it”? “It” is the return of Christ and the rapture.
- Third, Paul says that Christ will not return and the rapture will not take place until the apostasy occurs and the Antichrist is revealed as a man of lawlessness by sitting in the Jerusalem Temple and proclaim-
Therefore, the rapture, as we have seen clearly in the two previous examples, takes place after the Great Tribulation when Jesus returns.

4. **Believers who experience the rapture will immediately receive a resurrected body.**

- Teaching the Corinthians about the resurrection of the dead, Paul said, “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep [there will be people who are alive when the resurrection of the dead takes place], but we will all be changed [both the dead in Christ and those who are alive will receive resurrected bodies], in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51-52).
- First, Paul taught us that there will be believers alive on the earth when the dead in Christ receive resurrected bodies.
- Second, Paul showed us that both believers who are alive and those who have died will “all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” when the last trumpet sounds. The change that Paul was talking about is when believers receive a resurrected body.
- Paul was showing us that the transformation that takes place when our bodies are changed from a “humble state into conformity with the body of His glory” (Phil. 3:21) will be instantaneous—in the twinkling of an eye.
- Paul was teaching us that when the rapture takes place, believers who are caught up to the Lord in the air will immediately receive a resurrected body. Understanding this dynamic is important because it sheds more light on the timing of the rapture.
- When does the resurrection of the dead take place? John clearly showed us when he wrote:

  Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6).

- The “first resurrection” clearly takes place when Jesus returns—after the Great Tribulation.
- Believers who die in Christ before the rapture will go to heaven as a disembodied spirit.
- When Jesus returns, the dead in Christ—those with a disembodied
spirit—will receive a resurrected, glorified body and will reign with Christ for a thousand years.

- Following this, those who are alive at Christ’s coming are caught up into the air and are immediately transformed “into conformity with the body of His glory” (Phil. 3:21) in the twinkling of an eye. In other words, they also get their resurrected body at this time.

- When we examine 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, and Revelation 20:4-6, we clearly see the following:
  
  1. The rapture of those who are alive at His coming takes place during the same event as the dead in Christ receiving resurrected bodies;
  2. The dead in Christ will receive resurrected bodies first;
  3. Then those who are alive at Christ’s coming will be caught up in the air to be with the Lord;
  4. At that moment, believers will instantly receive a resurrected body;
  5. This all happens when Jesus returns, after the Great Tribulation.

The Rapture Controversy

1. The timing of the rapture is one of the most controversial end-time subjects.

- The rapture itself is not controversial—most of the Church believes that the saints will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
- It is the timing of the rapture that has sparked so much controversy, so many heated debates, and so much widespread confusion in the Body of Christ.
- At issue is whether the rapture will take place before the Tribulation (Pre-Tribulation Rapture), before the Great Tribulation (Mid-Tribulation Rapture), or after the Great Tribulation (Post-Tribulation Rapture).
- We have already discussed the Post-Tribulation Rapture, which appears to be what the Scriptures clearly teach. Nevertheless, the most popular rapture theory in the Church today is not the Post-Tribulation Rapture, but the Pre-Tribulation Rapture.

2. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory teaches that the rapture will take place before the Tribulation begins.

- The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory is the most widely held belief in the Church today. This is the most popular theory taught in pulpits, magazines, books, movies, and on television.
- Made famous by the Left Behind series of books and movies, this theory is widely held in the Body of Christ.
- Predominantly, this theory is the most popular because it is the belief of many well-respected, intelligent, and articulate Bible teachers—not because it is clearly delineated in the Scriptures.
• Although there are no Scripture verses that directly teach that a rapture will take place before the Tribulation, the theory goes something like this:

The second coming of Christ is divided into two comings (Titus 2:13). Jesus will first come for His Church—known as the blessed hope. Later He will come with His Church—known as the glorious appearing.

This first part of the second coming involves a secret rapture with no signs indicating His return. The first part of the second coming is only for a brief moment to take believers to heaven before the wrath of God is poured out upon the world and before the Antichrist signs a peace treaty with Israel. People will know that a secret rapture has taken place when a large portion of the world’s population is suddenly missing. The result will be widespread panic, chaos, and confusion. Based upon this theory, the rapture is the next big event in God’s prophetic calendar and could happen at any moment.

The second part of the second coming is very public. Jesus will return with His people, whom He took to heaven some years earlier, to destroy the ungodly and to setup His kingdom in Jerusalem.

3. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory grew in popularity after 1830.

• The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory was popularized by John Nelson Darby, who helped spread this theory throughout the world.
• After Darby persuaded Scofield to adopt this theory, Scofield incorporated it into the Scofield Bible, which combined interpretive commentary with the inspired text.
• Many people who read this Bible, which became a bestseller, had a hard time distinguishing between the commentary about the Pre-Tribulation Rapture and the inspired text. Thus, readers mistakenly assumed the Pre-Tribulation Rapture was in the Bible.
• This was one of the biggest factors in promoting the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory.

There is no evidence that the early, apostolic Church believed in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. They believed that the rapture would take place when Jesus returned—after the Great Tribulation.

4. There is not one Scripture that clearly shows the rapture taking place before the Tribulation.

• As we have already seen, the Post-Tribulation Rapture theory is
clearly revealed in the Scriptures whereas the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory is based upon implicit references and human reasoning.

- We must be careful to believe what the Bible teaches and not to use our predetermined beliefs and hopeful wishes to create theological theories.
- David Pawson gave an excellent warning about this when he said, “When doctrine is built upon inference rather than clear statements, there is a much greater risk of reading into Scripture (eisegesis) what is not actually there, rather than reading out of Scripture (exegesis) what is actually there.”
- If you have accepted the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory without thoroughly examining the Scriptures, take a step back and challenge this theory with the Word of God.
- Only accept what the Bible clearly teaches. Don’t accept a theological claim just because someone is popular, articulate, intelligent, is on television, has written books, is a preacher, or a seminary professor. Don’t accept any teaching unless you see it clearly in the Word of God.

The Danger of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory

1. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory creates a spectator mentality toward end-time events.

- The Bible clearly reveals that we are called into partnership with God in the end times. We are to be participators—not spectators—in end-time events.
- The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory creates a spectator mentality toward the end times. Since this theory teaches that we will watch the end-time drama unfold from heaven—with no role to play on the earth—many believers who accept this theory become passive about the end times.
- As we discussed in Session 1, we have a mission-critical role to play in the end times. We are called to partner with God in end-time events (Rev. 5:8; 8:1-6; 18:20; Joel 2:17-32; Isaiah 62:6-7).

2. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory makes the subject of the end times irrelevant and unpractical.

- At first, understanding end-time prophecy can be a little confusing. It takes time reading books and commentaries, searching the Scriptures, praying through complicated issues, and discussing the end times with others.
- Many people don’t study the end times because they don’t believe they will have to live through this challenging period. Why? Because they have bought into the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory. Their thinking goes something like this: “Why bother reading the book of Revelation. If I am going to be out of here before all of these really bad things happen, then I am not going to worry about trying to understand this complicated book.”
In the minds of many who believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory, the prophetic Scriptures have become an optional subject. They might read these Scriptures out of curiosity, but there is no real urgency when reading.

Imagine two people going to boot camp. Let’s call them Bob and Jim. Before boot camp begins, Bob is told that he will never have to go to war. The army will give him an honorable discharge right after boot camp is over. Jim, on the other hand, is told that he will be sent directly into frontline combat in the Middle East. Who do you think will get the most out of boot camp? That’s right—Jim. For Bob, the information and training that he receives from boot camp will never have any practical value. However, for Jim, what he receives from boot camp will be a matter of life or death. Jim will take everything from boot camp to heart.

The same is true with us. If we are like Bob—and have believed that we will be raptured before the trouble hits—then the prophetic Scriptures will not have that much of an impact on our lives. Like Bob, we will view them as impractical and irrelevant.

However, if we have searched the Scriptures with an honest and humble heart, laying down our preconceived ideas, we will see that the Church will live through the Tribulation period. Then we will be more like Jim. The prophetic Scriptures, like the book of Revelation, will not just be an optional book that we read out of curiosity. The material in this book will be a matter of life and death for us. We will read with a real sense of urgency.

3. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory will probably cause many in the Church to be offended at God in the end times.

If we believe that we are going to escape the tough and difficult times of the Tribulation—that we will be raptured away before things get too difficult—then we might become offended at God if we actually have to go through them.

The Bible says that “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). As we have seen in this session, this includes going through the Tribulation.

Jesus warned that many people would be offended in the end times (Matt. 24:10). Could this include the believers who accepted the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory? Believing that they would escape the end-time trouble, perhaps they will find themselves living through the Tribulation unprepared for this crisis.

Can you imagine what the believers who accepted the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory might think if they are alive during the Tribulation? Perhaps their thoughts will be something like this: “What kind of God would allow me to go through something like this? I thought you loved me; why are You making me suffer like this?”

It is better to work through these types of issues now rather than when the crisis hits so that we do not become offended at God.
4. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory could cause many in the Church to fall away from the faith when the trouble comes.

- The Scriptures describe a great falling away from the faith that will take place before the Lord returns. Notice some of these references:

  Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come [the Day of the Lord] unless the apostasy comes first (2 Thess. 2:3).

  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 (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

  Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another....Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved (Matt. 24:9-13).

- When believers buy into the idea that the rapture will take them away before the Tribulation, then the urgency to prepare for the end times disappears.
- Perhaps believers who are unprepared for the coming crisis will not be able to embrace the suffering and persecution that will be rampant in the end times and will turn from God to follow the Antichrist.
- Maybe some believers will not be emotionally prepared to suffer the financial challenges of refusing the mark of the beast and will cave in to the pressure.

5. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory teaches escapism rather than endurance.

- The Bible clearly encourages us to endure through our tribulations—not to escape from them.
- Notice some Scriptures that encourage patient endurance in the end times:

  But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved (Matt. 24:13).

  By your endurance you will gain your lives (Luke 21:19).

  Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus....“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on! Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them” (Rev. 14:12-13)
If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints (Rev. 13:10).

- We are not called to escape trials, tribulations, and tests—we are called to endure through them and to overcome them.
- The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory encourages escapism rather than endurance. It does not prepare us to go through the unprecedented difficulties that will come upon the earth.
- Consider the following testimony from Corrie ten Boom:

  I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution. In China the Christians were told: “Don’t worry, before the tribulation comes, you will be translated, raptured.” Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a bishop from China say, sadly: “We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them Jesus would come first.” Turning to me, he said: “Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes—to stand and not faint.” I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in training for the tribulation.2

- What a powerful testimony! Rather than waiting to escape the troubles that are coming in the future, we should be “in training for the tribulation.”

While much of the Church is waiting to “go up,” God wants us to “grow up” and release His judgments against the Antichrist and his empire.

Notes

2. Ibid., p. 199.
Review Questions

True or False

1. The word “rapture” is found three times in the Bible.
2. The rapture is the time when believers are caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
3. Paul was the first person to introduce the rapture concept.
4. In Matthew 24:29-31, Jesus taught that the rapture would take place after the Great Tribulation.
5. Those alive at Christ’s coming will receive a resurrected body before the dead in Christ.
6. Believers who experience the rapture will immediately receive a resurrection body.
7. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory is clearly taught in the Bible.
8. The Post-Tribulation Rapture theory is clearly taught in the Bible.

Fill in the Blanks

9. The _______ of the rapture is one of the most ____________ end-time subjects.
10. There is no evidence that the early, _________ ________ believed in a Pre-Tribulation Rapture.
11. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory creates a ___________ __________ toward end-time events.
12. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory makes the subject of the end times _________ and ___________.
13. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory teaches ____________ rather than ____________.
14. The concept of a rapture is found in _____________________, _____________________, _____________________, and _____________________.

15. The rapture of those who are alive at His coming takes place during the same _________ as the dead in Christ receiving resurrected bodies.

16. The early Church believed that the rapture would take place when Jesus _________—after the _________ ________________.

From the choices on the right, choose the statements that are true.

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<td>The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory is clearly taught in the Bible.</td>
<td>The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory creates a spectator mentality toward end-time events.</td>
<td>The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory teaches that the rapture will take place when Jesus returns.</td>
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<td>The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory was not taught by the early Church.</td>
<td>The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory is the most popular view in the Church today.</td>
<td>The Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory teaches escapism rather than endurance.</td>
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Session 7

Understanding the Millennial Kingdom

This session covers:

- An overview of the Millennial Kingdom
- The purpose of the Millennial Kingdom
- How the faithful saints will rule with Christ

This session corresponds to:

- Session 7 of Prophetic Vision for the End Times CDs

An Overview of the Millennial Kingdom

1. The ultimate prophetic theme in the end times is Jesus’ second coming to establish His kingdom on the earth.

   - This time of prophetic fulfillment is known as the Messianic Age, the Kingdom Age, or the Millennial Kingdom. It is the time when Jesus will reign as King from Jerusalem for a thousand years (Zech. 14:16; Rev. 20:4).
   - It will be a time of unprecedented peace, prosperity, righteousness, and glory (Isa. 60).
   - It will be a period when heaven invades earth, all of God’s enemies are defeated, Satan and his demons are bound for a thousand years, and Jesus rules the nations with a rod of iron (Ps. 2; Rev. 20).
   - In the Millennial Kingdom, the world will be transformed into a lush paradise, harmony will be restored between humanity and creation, and worship will fill the planet as the glory of God covers the earth like the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:6-10).
   - Notice these Scriptures that describe Jesus as the
King over all the earth:

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne [in Jerusalem]. All the nations will be gathered before Him (Matt. 25:31-32).

And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one (Zech. 14:9).

From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron....And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:15-16).

2. **The Millennium is a literal one-thousand year period when Jesus rules the whole world from Jerusalem.**

- Millennium is from the Latin "mille," which means a thousand.
- John described Jesus’ thousand-year reign when he wrote, "I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them....They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years....They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4-6).
- During the thousand-year reign of Christ, the kingdom of God will come in fullness to the earth. This will affect every sphere of life, including politics, agriculture, economics, education, law enforcement, family dynamics, media, the arts, technology, athletics, and every social institution.
- The result will be a one-thousand year period of unprecedented blessing for the whole earth as Jesus establishes righteousness and prosperity, and restores the agriculture, atmosphere, and animal life to the conditions similar to the Garden of Eden (Rev. 20:1-6; Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6-9; 11:1-16; 51:1-8; 60:6-22; 65:17-25; Ps. 2:6-12; 110:1-7; Mt. 5:5; 6:10; 17:11).
- The Millennial Kingdom is one of the major revelations of Scripture. Jesus’ core message was that God’s kingdom was being released in a new measure on earth. The New Testament makes clear that the kingdom is already here in a limited expression but is not yet fully here until Jesus returns.
- Recall that Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). This prayer will be completely answered when the kingdom of God comes to the earth in fullness during the Millennial Kingdom.

3. **Jesus will rule over two types of kings in the Millennial Kingdom.**

- Daniel saw the heavenly coronation of Jesus as the eternal King who would rule over all the earth. He wrote, "One like the Son of Man [Jesus]...came to the Ancient of Days [the Father]....To Him [Jesus]
was given...a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him....His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve Him” (Dan. 7:13-14, 27, NKJV).

- John described Jesus as the “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16).
- Jesus, as King of kings, will govern a worldwide kingdom in partnership with two types of kings:

  1. The kings of the earth with non-resurrected bodies who survived the end-time shakings (Isa. 4:3; 10:20; 66:19; Jer. 31:2; Joel 2:32; Zech. 14:16; Rev. 21:24).
  2. The saints with resurrected bodies who will rule with Christ as kings (Rev. 20:6).

- John described these two types of kings when he wrote, “Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth [non-resurrected bodies]. To Him who loved us...and has made us [resurrected saints] kings and priests to His God and Father” (Rev. 1:5-6, NKJV).
- In the Millennial Kingdom, the kings of the earth will be saved, will worship Jesus, and will base their national governments on God’s Word (Ps. 72:11, 102:15, 138:4; Isa. 62:2).
- Psalm 72:11 states, "All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him” (NKJV).
- Saints with resurrected bodies will be made kings and/or rulers over different spheres of life (Matt. 19:28, 20:21-23, 25:23; Luke 19:17-19, 22:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom 8:17).
- John wrote, “He who overcomes...TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON” (Rev. 2:26-27). The overcoming saints, in partnership with Jesus, will rule the nations with a rod of iron.
- These two types of kings, together with Christ, will establish a godly social order that will transform every sphere of life.

4. **In the Millennial Kingdom, the natural processes of life will continue on the earth.**

- Ephesians 1:10 says that heaven and earth will be brought together as one in Christ. This will progress to a new level in the Millennial Kingdom.
- Heaven speaks of the glory of God and the unlimited, supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. The earth speaks of the natural processes of life, as we know it today. In the Millennial Kingdom, the natural processes of life will not be discarded—they will be brought to an entirely new level by the glory of God and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.
- Speaking of the Millennial Kingdom, Isaiah prophesied that the offspring of Christ will “possess nations and will resettle the desolate cities” (Isa. 54:3).
- This will probably involve replacing the governmental leaders from the
Antichrist’s worldwide government with new people at every level of public life.

- Think about how devastated the world will be after the Tribulation. The earthquakes that will be released before the Lord returns will decimate the infrastructure of many cities. The Antichrist will also turn the whole world into a desolate wilderness as he subdues the nations by the most formidable military power in history (Isa. 14:17).
- When the Bible talks about resettling the desolate cities, it will probably involve rebuilding the infrastructures that were destroyed during the Tribulation. Perhaps this will involve rebuilding highways, bridges, economic systems, educational systems, and law enforcement.
- The resurrected saints, in partnership with the kings of the earth, will work together to fully restore the cities of the earth that were destroyed during the Tribulation.
- Concerning the Millennial Kingdom, Isaiah wrote:

  No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed. They will build houses and inhabit them; they will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another inhabit, they will not plant and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, and My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, and their descendants with them....The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain (Isa. 65:20-25).

5. Jesus will not instantaneously transform every sphere of life the moment He returns.

- When Jesus returns, He will not just wave His hand, snap His fingers, and magically restore the earth. It will take time for His kingdom to spread and His influence to affect every city in every nation.
- Isaiah wrote, “There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore” (Isa. 9:7). Notice that there will be “no end to the increase of His government.”
- Jesus’ government will be increasing during the Millennial Kingdom. There will be a progressive increase of Jesus’ influence throughout the nations until it penetrates every facet of every institution.
- The survivors of the Tribulation who did not take the mark of the beast or accept Christ will not be instantaneously discipled. It will take time to convert people individually, disciple them, and lead them into deep worship and adoration of the King of kings. Notice this Scripture, which is in the context of the Millennial Kingdom:
“For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory [the nations will come to see Jesus’ glory in Jerusalem]. I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them [the survivors of Israel] to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Rosh, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coasts that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations. Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the LORD, “just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites,” says the LORD (Isa. 66:18-21).

- This passage of Scripture is such an interesting concept. Notice some key truths in this passage:
  - “The time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory.” The Lord will gather people who survived the Tribulation to Jerusalem to see His glory.
  - “I will...send survivors from them to the nations.” The survivors mentioned here are most likely the Jews who survived the Tribulation. God will send them to the nations as missionaries.
  - “That have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations.” There will be people in the nations during the Millennial Kingdom that have never heard of God’s fame nor seen His glory. To reach these for salvation and to see them become worshipers, God will send the survivors of Israel to the nations in order to make Jesus’ fame known.
  - “Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the Lord...to My holy mountain Jerusalem.” The survivors of Israel will make Jesus’ fame known to the nations and then they will bring these people back to Israel to see Jesus’ glory with their own eyes.
  - “I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites.” Jesus will choose some of these people who gather to Jerusalem from the nations to be His priests. These will minister to Jesus in the Millennial Temple.

- The point in all of this is to illustrate the progressive increase of Jesus’ government in the nations. It will take time to disciple the nations and bring them into full allegiance to the Lord Jesus. That is why both Jesus and the saints will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:27; 19:15). The rod of iron will be used to discipline those who disobey God’s laws.
6. It is important to understand the purpose of the Millennial Kingdom.

- The purpose of the millennial reign of Christ is to prepare the nations for the Father coming in the fullness of His glory to the earth (Rev. 21:1-4, 22:3-5).
- Writing about the Millennial Kingdom, Paul stated, “Then comes the end [of the Millennial Kingdom], when He [Jesus] hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power [it will take time to do this]. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:24-25).
- The purpose of Christ’s one-thousand year reign is to abolish “all rule and all authority and power” and to “put all His enemies under His feet.”
- Think about this for a minute. If Christ rules for one-thousand years and He also rules until all authority and power and every enemy has been put under His feet, then maybe it takes a thousand years for all of this to happen. Perhaps it takes a thousand years to spread, mature, and test the righteousness in every nation.
- Maybe it takes a thousand years for Jesus’ government to increase into every sphere of life and to prepare the nations for the Father’s glory and His eternal reign.

7. The Millennial Kingdom is a one-thousand year transitional period between this current age and eternity.

- When the thousand-year reign of Christ is complete and His influence has spread into every sphere of society in all nations, Satan will be released from prison to test the nations’ obedience to the Word of God (Rev. 20:7-8).
- John said that the number of those deceived by Satan will be ”like the sand of the seashore” (Rev. 20:8).
- To prepare the nations for the fullness of the Father’s glory, Satan will be allowed to test the nations’ obedience so that every form of unrighteousness can be purged from the earth.
- Following Satan’s unsuccessful bid to recapture the earth, God will judge the dead according to their works (Rev. 20:11-13). This is known as the Great White Throne Judgment.
- Then comes eternity, when unbelievers are cast into the lake of fire, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven to earth, and the saints enjoy the fullness of God’s glory forever (Rev. 20:14-15, 21:1-22:5).

8. Notice some characteristics of the Millennial Kingdom.

- Worldwide justice (Is. 9:7, 11:3-5, 28:17, 32:16, 42:1-4);
- Unprecedented peace (Is. 2:4, 9:4-7, 11:6-9, 32:17-18, 65:25);
- Fullness of joy (Is. 9:3-4, 12:3-6, 14:7-8, 25:8-9, 61:7, 10);
- Satan bound (Rev. 20:1-7);
- Healing (Is. 29:17-19, 35:3-6, 61:1-2; Jer. 31:8; Mic. 4:6-7; Zeph. 3:19);
- Longevity of life (Is. 65:20, 22);
The Faithful Saints Ruling with Christ

1. In the Millennial Kingdom, Jesus will share His power and authority with the faithful saints throughout history.

- The Bible says that Jesus “has made us kings and priests to His God and Father” and “we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 1:5-6, 5:10, NKJV).
- As kings, the saints will rule and reign with judicial responsibility and kingdom authority. This involves bringing justice and righteousness into their sphere of authority.
- Paul said that “the saints will judge the world” and that “we will judge angels” (1 Cor. 6:2).
- In the Millennial Kingdom, the overcoming saints will rule the nations with a rod of iron, establish justice in their jurisdiction, and administrate punishment on sinners.
- Jesus promised the overcomers that they would have “authority over the nations” and that they would “rule them with a rod of iron” (Rev. 2:26-27).
- Jesus told the lukewarm Laodiceans, “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21). The throne represents not only a place of intimacy but also authority.

2. Ruling and reigning with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom is not automatic—it is a reward for the overcomers.

- Many people think that ruling and reigning with Christ is an automatic blessing of the New Covenant. They think that we can live however we want, and because of God's grace, He will let us rule the nations in the Millennial Kingdom. However, nothing is further from the truth.
- Jesus said that the believers in Thyatira had to overcome the works of Jezebel, which included idolatry, sensuality, immorality, impurity, and witchcraft, in order to have authority over the nations and rule them with a rod of iron in the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 2:25-29).
- Jesus said that the lukewarm believers at Laodicea had to overcome spiritual complacency, apathy, pride, and self-satisfaction in order to sit down with Jesus on His throne (Rev. 3:21).
• In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5, NKJV). In this passage, the Lord is talking about inheriting the earth in the Millennial Kingdom. Only the meek will return with Christ and rule with Him.

• What does it mean to be meek? It means that we no longer do things in our own power, strength, and wisdom and that we do not strive against God. Meekness is total and complete reliance upon God for everything. Meekness is the antithesis of pride, rebellion, independence, and stubbornness.

• If we want to inherit the earth in the Millennial Kingdom and rule with Christ, then we must submit to the Holy Spirit now and let Him break us, mold us, and develop meekness within us.

• Jesus used the rewards of ruling and reigning with Him in the Millennial Kingdom to motivate us to righteousness now. By offering us a place of government in the Millennial Kingdom, Jesus inspires us to resist compromise, lethargy, worldliness, pride, independence, and rebellion.

• Having a vision of the Millennial Kingdom and the rewards promised to the overcomers inspires us to live wholeheartedly for God now.

• This is how Jesus motivated Peter, John, and the other apostles to give up everything and follow Him. He said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration [the Millennial Kingdom] when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne [in Jerusalem], you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:27-30).

• In the parable of the minas, Jesus told the servant who made ten minas, “Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities” (Luke 19:16-17). These cities are not something spiritual or symbolic. They are literal cities in the Millennial Kingdom. As we are faithful in the very small things that God has entrusted to us, we will receive authority to rule and reign with Christ in the Millennium.

3. How we live now determines our position in the Millennial Kingdom and for all eternity.

• The Bible says that our life is a “vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

• Psalm 90:10 says, “As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years...for soon it is gone and we fly away.” If we are blessed, we have seventy to eighty years to prepare for eternity.

• Our role in the next life is based upon how we live during our few short years on earth.

• Talking about this concept, Mike Bickle said:

   Life on earth in this age can be likened to a 70 year internship (Ps. 90:10) which prepares us for our life on earth in the age to come. Our next stage of life in the age to come starts in the Millennial Kingdom which is the time when our first main minis-
try calling begins. This primary ministry assignment lasts for 1,000-years....The choices we make in our 70 year internship determine where and how we will function in our 1,000-year ministry assignment. Few believers will be in government.¹

- Our “70 year internship” will be evaluated according to the condition of our heart and if we were faithful with the resources God entrusted to us. Did we make Jesus our first love? Did we overcome spiritual apathy, complacency, or pride? Did we develop meekness, humility, and Christ-likeness? Were we faithful with the resources that were entrusted to us? How did we manage our time, money, and talents?

The way we live today determines our eternal destiny and our role in Jesus’ Millennial government. With such an awesome future, don’t settle for anything less than God’s highest and best. Make a decision today to live for eternity, to overcome everything that hinders you, and to press on toward the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Notes

Review Questions

True or False

_____ 1. The Millennium is a literal one-thousand year period when Jesus rules the whole world from Jerusalem.

_____ 2. In the Millennial Kingdom, the natural processes of life will continue on the earth.

_____ 3. When Jesus returns, the nations will be instantly transformed.

_____ 4. The purpose of the Millennial Kingdom is to bind Satan for a thousand years.

_____ 5. Ruling and reigning with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom is an automatic reward for every born-again believer.

_____ 6. Israel will be exalted above all the nations in the Millennial Kingdom.

_____ 7. How we live our life will determine our position in the Millennial Kingdom.

_____ 8. The New Testament makes clear that the kingdom is already here in fullness.

_____ 9. Millennium is from the Latin “mille,” which means a thousand.

Fill in the Blanks

10. Ephesians 1:10 says that _________ and _________ will be brought together as ______ in Christ.

11. Jesus’ government will be ___________ during the Millennial Kingdom.

12. In the Millennial Kingdom, Jesus will share His _________ and _________ with the faithful saints throughout history.

13. Jesus used the _________ of ruling and reigning with Him in the Millennial Kingdom to _________ us to ______________ now.

14. The ______________ _________ in partnership with the _________ of the earth will work together to fully restore the cities of the earth that were destroyed during the ______________.

15. The purpose of the millennial reign of Christ is to ______________ the nations for the
Father coming in the ___________ of His _________ to the earth.

Match the Scripture verse(s) on the left that best describe(s) the characteristic of the Millennial Kingdom on the right.

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Israel in the End Times

This session covers:

- Israel’s prophetic destiny
- Six traits about Israel in the Millennial Kingdom
- Six phases of Israel’s restoration
- Why Jerusalem is a source of international controversy

This session corresponds to:

- Session 8 of Prophetic Vision for the End Times CDs

Israel’s Prophetic Destiny

1. God has promised to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

   - Isaiah 62:6-7 states, “On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”
   - When Isaiah said that Jerusalem would become a praise in the earth, he was alluding to the time when God fulfills every prophetic promise spoken over Israel.
   - This will be the time when God fulfills every one of Israel’s covenant promises (Rom. 9:4).

2. Israel’s prophetic destiny will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom.

   - Though Israel has been in the process of being restored since 1948, her greatest time of prophetic fulfillment will be in the Millennial Kingdom.
As we saw in Session 7, this time of prophetic fulfillment is known as the Messianic Age, the Kingdom Age, or the Millennial Kingdom. It is the time when Jesus will reign as King from Jerusalem for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).
At this time, Israel will be blessed, exalted, favored, glorious, powerful, and prosperous. She will no longer be rejected and scorned. Instead, Israel will become the joy of the whole earth.

Six Traits about Israel in the Millennial Kingdom

1. Jerusalem will be the capital city of the kingdom of God.
   - Since God’s covenant oath is with Jerusalem, it is the only city in the world whose destiny is secure. When Jesus returns, He will make Jerusalem—not Washington, D.C., London, or Rome—the capital city of the world.
   - Every major city, no matter how prominent and self-sufficient today, will depend upon Jerusalem for everything—including finances, governmental decisions, justice, and peace.
   - From Jerusalem, God’s kingdom will go forth in fullness into every Gentile nation in the earth.
   - Jesus called Jerusalem “the city of the Great King” (Matt. 5:35).
   - Jeremiah declared, “At that time they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the Lord,’ and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord” (Jer. 3:17).
   - Zechariah prophesied, “I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain” (Zech. 8:3).
   - Isaiah described Jerusalem as the place where justice, peace, divine decrees, instruction, and the Word of God will go forth into the nations (Isa. 2:2-4).
   - From Jerusalem, Jesus will reign as King over the earth, serve as judge of the nations, and administer the Law of God (Isa. 33:20-22; Zech. 14:9).
   - As the capital city of God’s kingdom, kings, queens, presidents, and statesmen will come to Jerusalem for wisdom, guidance, blessing, and favor.
   - Any nation or kingdom that will not serve Israel will perish under the judicial hand of God (Isa. 60:12).

2. Israel will be the worship and prayer center of the world.
   - When David was the king of Israel, he established a worship and prayer center where singers and musicians ministered to the Lord all day and all night (1 Chron. 11-16). As these worshipers engaged in vibrant praise, deep worship, prophetic singing, and fervent prayer, Israel experienced her greatest transformation in history (1 Chron. 18-20).
When Jesus returns, He will completely restore the Tabernacle of David on Mount Zion in the rebuilt Jerusalem temple (Amos 9:11-12; Acts 15:16-18), transform Israel into a nation of worshiping priests (Ex. 19:6; Mal. 3:1-4), and establish His house of prayer for all nations (Isa. 56:7). Speaking to Israel, Isaiah prophesied that “a throne will even be established in lovingkindness, and a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent [tabernacle] of David; moreover, he will seek justice and be prompt in righteousness” (Isa. 16:5).

When God completely restores the Tabernacle of David in the Millennial Kingdom, all the earth will come to Jerusalem “year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths” (Zech. 14:16).

When God makes Jerusalem the worship center of the world, the nations will flock to Israel to worship Jesus, the King of the earth (Zech. 8:20-23).

In the Millennial Kingdom, many people and mighty nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord and entreat His favor.

Even Israel’s staunchest enemies will worship the Lord in Jerusalem or face terrible consequences (Isa. 60:12-14).

God will withhold rain from any nation that does not come to Israel to worship the King (Zech. 14:17-19).

3. Israel will be the place from which God’s glory shines into the nations.

Jesus is returning as a glorious King. He is not coming again as a sacrificial Lamb; He is returning to destroy the enemies of God and to rule over the nations of the earth.

The King of the Jews—the Lion from the tribe of Judah—will return in all of His Father’s glory.

Jesus will descend “from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,” engulfing the sky with blazing holiness (2 Thess. 1:7). The kings of the earth will tremble at His glorious appearing.

Jesus’ glory will be so intense that “the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders” (Isa. 24:23).

God’s glory in Jerusalem will be so intense that it will eclipse the sun and the moon. In fact, God’s glory in Jerusalem will be seven times brighter than the sun (Isa. 30:26).

From Israel, God will showcase His glory to the nations. Isaiah prophesied, “For the LORD has redeemed Jacob and in Israel He shows forth His glory” (Isa. 44:23).

Isaiah said further, “You are My Servant, Israel, in whom I will show My glory” (Isa. 49:3).

Both of these promises will be completely fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom when God makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

From Jerusalem, the Lord’s beauty and glory will shine into the nations, covering the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2:14; Isa. 4:2).
4. **Israel will be the place from which divine blessings, favor, prosperity, and peace are released into the nations.**

- In the Millennial Kingdom, God’s favor will be so abundant upon the Jewish state that “ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you’” (Zech. 8:23).
- Isaiah showed us how kings and queens, statesmen and presidents will minister to Israel and bring in the wealth of the nations (Isa. 60:3-5, 10-11).
- In the future, when God glorifies Israel, the Jewish nation will become the center from which unprecedented prosperity and divine blessings are released into the nations.
- Financial abundance will flow like a river from Jerusalem into the earth.
- Nations and kings will come to Israel’s light. Fear, oppression, and war will cease. In its place, peace, righteousness, and holiness will abound.
- Isaiah even told Israel that “the sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you, and all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; and they will call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (Isa. 60:14-15).
- When God makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth, the Jewish people will “take root...blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit” (Isa. 27:6).
- Israel will become “a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God” (Isa. 62:3).

5. **Israel will be a place of unspeakable joy and gladness.**

- For centuries, many nations have despised Israel. When God exalts the Jewish state in the Millennial Kingdom, however, He will transform the war-torn nation into a country that brings unspeakable joy and gladness.
- Isaiah told Israel, “Whereas you have been forsaken and hated with no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, a joy from generation to generation” (Isa. 60:15).
- In the future, God will make Israel the joy of the entire world. No longer will governmental leaders attempt to divide Israel; instead, all nations will look upon Israel as the source of blessings and gladness (Isa. 65:18-19).
- In the Millennial Kingdom, the Jewish people will no longer be scorned and despised; instead, the nations of the earth will shout joyfully over Jerusalem and bow down to the Jewish people with deep respect and gratitude.
- God’s blueprint for the age to come has Jerusalem at center stage—the joy of the whole earth.
6. **Israel's borders will extend from Egypt to Iraq.**

- When God made a covenant with Abraham, He told him, “I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an *everlasting possession*” (Gen. 17:8).
- Make no mistake about it—the land of Israel is the everlasting possession of the Jewish people. However, the borders of the land are supposed to extend from the “the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:18).
- The only time when Israel came close to possessing all of this territory was in the days of King David and King Solomon (1 Chron. 18:3).
- Today, the land defined by these covenant borders cuts right through Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. There is not anyone alive who believes that Israel can possess this land apart from the Messiah’s coming. If Israel tried to expand her borders into Iraq today, World War III would break out in an instant!
- When Jesus returns and sets up His Millennial Kingdom in Jerusalem, Israel’s borders will extend from Egypt into Iraq.
- Isaiah prophesied, “You have increased the nation, O LORD, You have increased the nation, You are glorified; You have extended all the borders of the land” (Isa. 26:15).
- When Jesus establishes His government in Jerusalem, the Jewish people will branch outward and possess the covenant territory promised to Abraham.
- They will “swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west [the Palestinian territory]; together they will plunder the sons of the east [Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq]; they will possess Edom and Moab [southern and central Jordan], and the sons of Ammon [the Jordanians] will be subject to them” (Isa. 11:14).
- Following this conquest, God will build a highway that will stretch from Egypt—through the heart of the Middle East—into Syria and Iraq (Isa. 19:23). On this highway, the redeemed sons of Abraham—in unity, peace, and love—will travel together to worship the King of the earth.
- In the days to come, God will transform the Middle East into a highway of holiness that will unite the most hated enemies, even healing the millenniums-old rift between Isaac and Ishmael.
- God specifically stated that Egypt would become “My people”; that Assyria (modern-day Syria and Iraq) will be “the work of My hands”; and that Israel is “My inheritance” (Isa. 19:25).
- Though it seems impossible when we watch the nightly news, God will transform the entire Middle East into “a blessing in the midst of the earth” during the Millennial Kingdom (Isa. 19:24).

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*Israel is like a prophetic clock that helps us discern God’s times and seasons. In the parable of the fig tree, Jesus taught us to know the signs that pointed to His return (Matt. 24:32-33). The restoration of Israel is a major sign that Jesus “is near, right at the door” (Matt. 24:33).*
The Restoration of Israel

1. Israel will be restored progressively into her ultimate prophetic destiny.

- We just saw that Israel will be the praise of the earth in the Millennial Kingdom.
- However, God’s Word shows us that Israel will be restored progressively into her ultimate prophetic destiny. This is a process that involves several steps.
- Ezekiel 36:24-28 details the process of Israel’s restoration. God began this prophecy by promising the Jewish people two things (Ezek. 36:24). First, the Lord vowed to give them their own land. Second, He promised to gather them from the surrounding nations back to Israel.
- Observe closely what God promised next. He stated, “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean” (Ezek. 36:25).
- The word “then” in this prophecy is a crucial word to understand. It illustrates the process that God is following to restore Israel.
- God has a prescribed order of events that must take place for His will to be accomplished in this nation.
- Before He saves the Jewish nation and cleanses them from their sins, He first promised to bring them back to the land of Israel.
- There is a roadmap that God is following to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

2. God’s roadmap to peace is much different than man’s.

- God has a roadmap to peace that will lead to the fulfillment of Israel’s prophetic destiny.
- God’s roadmap to peace is drastically different than man’s. Man’s Roadmap to Peace involves dividing Israel up and giving it to a terrorist nation. For some reason, wise politicians think that this will somehow solve the Mideast crisis.
- God’s roadmap to peace is altogether different. Though there will be temporary peace in the near future, ultimate peace will not come until the Prince of Peace returns.
- The six main phases of Israel’s restoration, which we will look at next, detail God’s roadmap to peace.

Six Phases of Israel’s Restoration

1. Statehood

- For over fifteen-hundred years, Israel was occupied and controlled by Gentile powers, just as Jesus predicted when He said, “Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24).
- However, though the Jewish people were devastated after Hitler murdered six million Jews in the Holocaust, God was watching over His
word to perform it.

- The Lord remembered Isaiah’s prophesy from thousands of years before when he had prophesied, “Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons” (Isa. 66:8).

- Miraculously, God used the United Nations—perhaps the most anti-Israel organization in the world today—to fulfill the prophetic Scriptures.

- On November 29, 1947, the U.N. voted thirty-three to thirteen to make Israel a sovereign nation.

- On May 14, 1948, Israel’s statehood became official as God caused a nation to be “born in one day.”

2. A massive Jewish exodus to Israel

- Numerous Scriptures describe the end-time exodus of Jews back to Israel (Deut. 30:3-5; Jer. 16:14-16; Ezek. 36:24-28; Isa. 43:5-6).

- Known also as aliyyah, which in Hebrew means “going up,” Jews have been returning in mass back to the land of their forefathers.

- Since 1948, millions of Jewish people have returned to Israel from the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and South America.

- In 1948, approximately six percent of the world’s Jewish population lived in Israel; in 2004, some thirty-five percent of the world’s Jews have chosen to make Israel their home.

- This exodus is important because it precedes the greatest revival in Israel’s history. In Ezekiel 39:27-29, God promised to reveal Himself to Israel and pour out His Spirit upon the Jews after He brings them back from the nations.

3. Temporary peace between the Jews and the Arabs

- Immediately after the birth of Israel in 1948, the Arabs declared a jihad (“holy war”) against the Jewish nation.

- During Israel’s brief modern-day history, she has already been involved in several wars with the Arabs, including the 1948 War of Independence, the Six-Day War of 1967, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

- Make no mistake about—the Arabs do not want peace with Israel; they want to wipe out the Jewish nation and recapture Jerusalem for Allah.

- However, God has promised to bring temporary peace between the Jews and the Arabs that will set the stage for the greatest revival in Israel’s history (Ezek. 38:8, 11).

4. Supernatural victory in the greatest jihad ever

- Somehow, someway—whether in five years, ten years, or five-hundred years—the Arab-Israeli conflict will culminate on the mountains of Israel. The Prophet Ezekiel described this war in great detail in
Ezekiel 38-39.

- Ezekiel 38:1-6 lists the nations that will attack Israel in this war. Most likely, these ancient nations relate to the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan; Russia; Turkey; Iran; Sudan; and Libya. 
- With the exception of Russia, all of these are Islamic nations with a common hatred of Israel.
- When this Islamic federation comes against Israel, God’s anger will burn and His wrath will be kindled. His terrifying presence will fall upon the mountains of Israel and “all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake.”
- The Lord will give Israel a supernatural victory over this Islamic federation (Ezek. 38:18-22).
- This event will trigger the greatest revival in Israel’s history, which is the next phase of Israel’s restoration.

5. **An unprecedented national revival**

- God promised that in the days ahead “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26).
- The Holy Spirit will tenderize the hardened part of Israel and heal her blindness. As a result, multitudes of Israelis will accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This revival will ultimately lead to Israel’s national salvation (Zech. 12:10).
- When will this happen? After God has gathered the Jewish people back to Israel, after a peace plan has quelled the violence between the Jews and the Arabs, and after an Islamic federation has been destroyed on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 39:11-22).
- After the Islamic army is defeated, God promised that “the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward” (Ezek. 39:22). This will be the beginning of all Israel being saved.
- God stated further, “I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel” (Ezek. 39:29).
- Israel’s supernatural victory in this end-time jihad will result in an unparalleled outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- Ultimately, this revival will lead to the second coming of Christ. Why? Because Jesus told the Jewish people that “you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Matt. 23:39, NIV).
- When the Jewish nation welcomes back her Messiah, we know that Jesus’ return is imminent.

6. **A baptism by fire**

- As we approach the end of the age, God will prepare Israel for her finest hour by baptizing her into fire. In the words of Daniel, this period will be “a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation” (Dan. 12:1).
This baptism by fire will purify Israel of every impurity and defilement. As a result, Jerusalem will become “the holy city”—a place where the “uncircumcised and the unclean will no longer come” (Isa. 52:1).

This period of unprecedented distress will prepare Israel for unprecedented greatness.

Isaiah 1:24-26 and Isaiah 4:3-4 describe this intense period in Israel’s future. These verses show that God will purify Israel much like a jeweler refines gold.

As the Lord refines Jerusalem, evil will reach heights never before seen. The Antichrist will unite the nations of the earth through a false hope of peace. He will gather the leading nations of the earth together and enact a peace treaty with Israel for seven years (Dan. 9:27).

Quite possibly, this peace treaty will enable the Jews to rebuild their temple on Mount Moriah, just as the Bible predicts (Rev. 11:2).

After three-and-a-half years, however, this demonic dictator will break his treaty, put an end to temple worship (Dan. 9:27), and enthrone himself as God in the Jewish Temple—forcing the whole world to worship him (Matt. 24:15-22; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 13).

This man of lawlessness, possessed by Satan, will be given extraordinary powers (Rev. 13:2-4). Because no nation will be able to wage war against him, he will subdue the whole earth under his dominion (Rev. 13:4-8).

During this time, the Antichrist will conquer Jerusalem, seize the Jewish people, and plunder their treasures. Subsequently, though God will supernaturally preserve a Jewish remnant, the Antichrist will be given authority to kill millions of Jews and exile many others to the nations (Matt. 24:15-22; Luke 21:20-24; Rev. 12; Zech. 13:8-9; Zech. 14:2).

The Bible says that the Antichrist will “tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months” (Rev. 11:2).

At the peak of Israel’s darkest hour—when all hope seems lost—the King of the Jews will return to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:3-4).

The whole world will tremble as they watch Heaven’s Champion descend with His valiant warriors to vanquish Israel’s foes (Isa. 13:7-8; Joel 2:6; Rev. 17:14, 19:11-19). With the breath of His mouth, Jesus will instantly destroy the Antichrist and his army (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:20-21). Then He will rule as King from Jerusalem for one-thousand years, fulfilling every one of Israel’s prophetic promises (Zech. 14:9).

**Understanding the Battle for Jerusalem**

1. **The battle for Jerusalem is the most significant battlefront in the spirit today.**

   - Although there has always been a battle for Jerusalem throughout history, the battle has never been as intense as it is today.
   - As previously mentioned, Israel has been at war with the Arabs since 1948 and has already been involved in the 1948 War of Independence, the Six-Day War of 1967, the Yom Kippur War of 1973, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
• The Arabs do not want peace with Israel; they want to wipe out the Jewish nation and recapture Jerusalem for Allah.

• Although the Battle for Jerusalem is intensifying, it will go to a whole new level before the Lord returns. Eventually, all the nations of the earth will attack Jerusalem, as these verses indicate:

  Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it (Zech. 12:1-3).

  For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city (Zech. 14:2).

2. We need to understand why the battle for Jerusalem is so important.

• Jesus told the Jews living in Jerusalem, “You will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Matt. 23:39, NIV).

• Jesus’ return depends upon a unified, sincere, and contrite invitation from the Jewish people living in Jerusalem. No other nation on earth has ever been given such an awesome privilege and responsibility.

• Jesus has bound Himself by His sacred word; and if it were possible to exterminate the Jewish people, Jesus would be forced to remain in heaven.

• Now we know that will not happen, but this is the very reason why the battle for Jerusalem is so important.

• Because of this promise, the devil wants to destroy Israel in order to abort God’s prophetic agenda. Satan seeks to exploit this prophecy as a loophole in God’s prophetic plan.

• How does Satan seek to do this? By controlling Jerusalem and seeing to it that no Jews are alive to invite Jesus back to be their King. This is why the devil has repeatedly tried to annihilate the Jewish race.

• Why? Because if the devil succeeds, there will be no return of Jesus. If he succeeds, the devil will not be cast into prison for a thousand years and ultimately sentenced to the lake of fire for all eternity (Rev. 20:2-3, 10).

• Talking about this very issue, Jim Maher states in his book, As Storm Clouds Gather:

  If the devil and his demonic hosts succeed in removing the Jewish people from the planet, then it’s checkmate. Game over. Why? Because God cannot lie and He cannot return if the Jewish people don’t exist to invite Him back. Are you beginning to feel the weightiness of this matter? Do you understand why the church’s principal, yet very neglected last-day mandate is
to pray for and reach the heart of the Jews? Not only are they a precious people but they play a pivotal role in the return of the Messiah. Beloved, this is huge in God’s last day economy.³

Because the powers of darkness want to annihilate Israel, the Church must stand in the gap and restrain the powers of darkness from carrying out their evil plans. This is why praying for the peace of Jerusalem is so important (Ps. 122:6). Now is the time for the Church to stand with Israel and to pray that Jerusalem would become a praise in the earth (Isa. 62:6-7).

Notes

1. The vibrant praise, deep worship, and prophetic singing that characterized the Tabernacle of David is being restored in the days leading up to the second coming of Christ. The ultimate restoration of the Tabernacle of David will be in the Millennial Kingdom in the rebuilt Jerusalem temple.
Review Questions

True or False

1. Before God saves the Jewish nation and cleanses them from their sins, He first promised to bring them back to the land of Israel.

2. Jerusalem will be the capital city of the kingdom of God in the Millennial Kingdom.

3. Jerusalem will become a praise in the earth in the Millennial Kingdom.

4. God promised to pour out His Spirit upon Israel before He supernaturally destroys an invading Islamic army.

5. When Jesus returns, He will completely restore the Tabernacle of David on Mount Zion in the rebuilt Jerusalem temple.

6. Israel’s borders will extend from Egypt to Iraq in the Millennial Kingdom.

7. Israel will be restored instantly into her ultimate prophetic destiny.

8. Israel is like a prophetic clock that helps us discern God’s times and seasons.

Fill in the Blank

9. From ____________, God’s kingdom will go forth in ______________ into every ___________ nation in the earth.

10. The Arabs do not want peace with Israel; they want to wipe out the Jewish nation and recapture ______________ for ____________.

11. In 1948, approximately ____ percent of the world’s Jewish population lived in Israel; in 2004, some ____________ percent of the world’s Jews have chosen to make Israel their home.

12. Israel will be the ___________ and ___________ center of the world.

13. Israel officially became a nation on ____________, ____________.

14. In the future, when God glorifies Israel, the Jewish nation will become the ______________ from which unprecedented ______________ and divine ______________ are released into the nations.
From the choices on the right, put the phases of Israel’s restoration in the correct order.

___ 15.

___ 16.

   Possible Matches for 15-20

   a. Jerusalem as a praise in the earth
   b. A baptism by fire
   c. Temporary peace between the Jews and the Arabs
   d. Statehood
   e. An unprecedented national revival
   f. Supernatural victory in the greatest jihad ever
   g. The Jews in Jerusalem welcoming Jesus back as Messiah
   h. The nations blessing Israel in the Millennial Kingdom
   i. A massive Jewish exodus to Israel
   j. Jesus establishing Jerusalem as the capital city of God’s kingdom.

___ 17.

___ 18.

___ 19.

___ 20.
The Kingdom Is Like a Wedding

1. The gospel is a romance between Jesus and broken humanity.

- In the parable of the wedding feast, Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a...wedding” (Matt. 22:2, NIV).
- The gospel is so much more than agreeing to a set of facts that will keep us out of hell. It is a romance with God. Jesus is a Bridegroom and we are His cherished Bride.
- Once you realize that you are the Bride of Christ, an amazing thing happens when you read the Bible. You begin to see how frequently the Scriptures allude to weddings, brides, bridegrooms, wedding feasts, and wedding attendants.
- The Bible begins with a wedding (Gen. 2:18-25) and ends with a wedding (Rev. 19:7). God clearly communicates that the kingdom of heaven is like a wedding by what He does first and last in His Word.
- Make no mistake about it—Christianity is much more than a set of facts, principles, and ordinances that
keep us out of hell. The gospel is a romance between Jesus and broken humanity. Jesus is a Bridegroom God who has burning passion, wholehearted affection, and deep desire for us.

2. The bridal relationship between Jesus and His Church is woven throughout the Bible in types, shadows, allegories, prophecies, and eternal truths.

- In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul revealed that marriage between a man and a woman pictures the relationship between Christ and the Church.
- With see this foreshadowed in Adam and Eve’s marriage. Just as Eve was made from Adam’s side, the Church was birthed out of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. And just as it was with Eve, through the Holy Spirit, we are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. We are Jesus’ perfect helpmate. We are called to partner with Him as He takes dominion over the earth.
- Esther is another picture of the Bride of Christ. In Esther, we see how the Bride of Christ will be prepared for the King and how we can partner with God through intercessory prayer to overthrow the antichrist kingdoms of this world.
- Ruth foreshadows how the Bride of Christ will mature in bridal love as we transition from the ways of the world into the harvest fields of our kinsmen Redeemer.
- The Song of Solomon is more than a natural romance between Solomon and the Shulammite maiden. It is an allegory of the Bride of Christ’s journey into deep intimacy and partnership with Jesus her beloved Bridegroom.
- Jesus’ first miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding because His best wine is truly saved for last when He marries His people (John 2:1-11; Rev. 19:7-8).
- John the Baptist saw his role as a friend of the Bridegroom who was called to prepare the Bride for Jesus (John 3:29).
- Both the parable of the wedding feast (Matt. 22:1-14) and the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) clearly reveal that the kingdom of heaven is like a wedding.
- In John 17:24-26, Jesus prayed that we would be with Him, see His glory, and love Him like the Father does.
- In Revelation 19:7, we see that “the marriage of the Lord has come” and “His bride has made herself ready.”
- The Bible even ends with the Spirit and the Bride asking Jesus to return as a Bridegroom (Rev. 22:17).

God’s eternal purpose of creation was to give His Son a Bride from the human race—an equally-yoked Bride that would partner with Him for all eternity.
The Parable of the Ten Virgins

1. The parable of the ten virgins speaks prophetically about the end-time Church.

   • Curious about the end times, the disciples asked Jesus, “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matt. 24:3).
   • Jesus answered their question with a detailed description of end-time events (Matt. 24-25). These two power-packed chapters contain some of the clearest information about what will happen just prior to the Lord’s return.
   • Matthew 24 describes the tribulations that will take place on the earth. As we have seen in this class, there will be famines, earthquakes, wars, upheavals, offenses, apostasy, persecution, and the worship of the Antichrist.
   • What many people don’t notice, however, is that Matthew 25 is a continuation of the Lord’s answer to the disciples’ question about the end times.
   • Because Bible translators inserted a chapter break between Matthew 24 and Matthew 25, we falsely assume that these two chapters are unrelated. But nothing is further from the truth. In fact, Matthew 25 describes how the Church should live and function in the end times.
   • Jesus said, “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom” (Matt. 25:1).
   • Whenever we see a “then” in Scripture we should always seek to know “when.” When will the kingdom of heaven be like virgins seeking the Bridegroom? In the end times just prior to the Lord’s return.
   • The parable of the ten virgins is a prophecy of what the end-time Church will look like and how it will function (Matt. 25:1-13).
   • Before the Lord returns, the Church will know her identity as a Bride and she will be seeking Jesus as Bridegroom.

2. The end-time Church will be just like a bride in an ancient Jewish wedding.

   • In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus used the common Jewish marriage custom of the day to describe how the end-time Church should await His coming.
   • This ancient custom consisted of five main phases:
     1. The arrangement of the marriage
     2. The betrothal
     3. The preparation period between the betrothal and the wedding
     4. The wedding ceremony
     5. The wedding feast

The Arrangement

   • The arrangement was the first step in the Jewish marriage
process and refers to the arrangements that were made prior to the legal betrothal.

- The arrangement was the time of matchmaking, often decided upon between the father of the groom and the father of the bride.
- Once the selection had been made, the parents prepared a written contract that depicted the terms and conditions of the marriage arrangement, the price to be paid by the groom, the responsibilities and obligations of both parties, and the dowry to be offered by the bride.

**The Betrothal**

- Once the arrangement was made and the contract agreed to by both parties, the couple would move on to the betrothal ceremony. The ceremony would include vows promising to be married, the exchange of rings or something else of value, and the sealing of the agreement by sharing a cup of wine.
- After this ceremony, the couple was legally married even though they did not live in the same house or consummate the marriage.
- Because a betrothed couple was legally married, a separation or parting of ways for any reason would require a legal divorce.

**The Preparation Period**

- The next phase of the Jewish wedding was the betrothal period, known as a time of preparation. The preparation phase normally lasted about a year, even though neither the groom nor the bride knew when the wedding would take place. The only one who knew was the groom’s father, who determined the specific time for the groom to go and get his bride.
- During the betrothal period, the groom remained at his father’s home and prepared a place for the two to live. This was normally done by adding a room to his father’s house.
- While the groom was busy building, the bride was preparing herself for the upcoming wedding. This usually involved three things:

1. **The bride was observed for her purity.** This custom required at least a full nine months to pass in order to ensure that the bride was not pregnant and to attempt to assure that she was a virgin.
2. **The bride consecrated herself.** She examined everything in her life and changed whatever was necessary in order to be ready for the holy covenant of marriage.
3. **The bride made her own wedding garments.** Ancient Jewish women did not have the luxury of going to the nearest bridal shop and purchasing a premade dress. They had to spend hours and hours making their wed-
ding garments and adorning them with the special touches to make them beautiful.

**The Wedding Ceremony**

- Toward the end of the year-long betrothal period, the bride waited with great expectancy for the groom to come and for the ceremony to take place. Even late in the evening the bride and her wedding party would keep their oil lamps burning in case it was time for the wedding to take place.
- The day of the ceremony was a surprise to both the groom and the bride. When the bridegroom was asked the date of the wedding, he could only say something like, “No man knows except my father.”
- When the time was right, the groom’s father would issue the approval for the ceremony to begin. The groom and his wedding party would leave the groom’s house to go get his bride. The friends of the bridegroom would shout, “Behold, the bridegroom comes!” and then they would blow the shofar. The groomsmen would lead the wedding party through the streets and bring the bride back to the groom’s home where the wedding canopy awaited.
- The wedding ceremony was performed under the wedding canopy. The vows made during the betrothal ceremony were completed in the marriage ceremony. The ceremony was once again sealed with a cup of wine to indicate the great joy that would accompany the festive celebration. The couple then consummated the marriage and lived together as husband and wife from that point forward.

**The Wedding Feast**

- The wedding feast was the highlight of the wedding ceremony. It was much more extensive than what westerners are accustomed to today. It consisted of seven full days of food, music, dance, and celebration.
- The primary purpose of the wedding feast was to honor the groom.
- As a way to honor the groom, the bride would put on her beautiful wedding garments that she made during her year of preparation and would display her beauty to the bridegroom’s friends.
- Following the wedding feast, the bridegroom and the bride would live together as husband and wife for the remainder of their lives.

The parable of the ten virgins describes *The Preparation Period* of the ancient Jewish wedding system. This parable instructs us how we should wait for the Bridegroom’s return.
3. We are pure virgins who are betrothed to Jesus as His Bride.

- If you are a born-again believer, you are the recipient of an arranged marriage. Your heavenly Father so loved the world that He arranged a marriage between His Son and mankind.
- He sent Jesus to explain the terms and conditions of a life with Him. He offered a heavenly marriage contract to describe what marriage to Him would include. Jesus, the Bridegroom, gave His life on the cross to purchase His Bride.
- The heavenly Father also sent His matchmaker, the Holy Spirit, to invite us to become the Bride of Christ and to say “yes” to this invitation.
- Alluding to the betrothal phase of an ancient Jewish wedding, Paul told the Corinthians, “I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin” (2 Cor. 11:2).
- As believers in Christ, we are pure virgins who have been betrothed to Jesus. Through the blood of Christ, we have been justified, our sins have been washed away, and our spirit has been made perfect (Rom. 5:1; Heb. 12:23).
- In the ancient Jewish marriage custom, betrothal was more formal and far more binding than an engagement is today. If for some reason a marriage between a betrothed bride and groom did not take place, the bride could not be married to another man until she received a certificate of divorce.
- This is what our relationship with Christ is like. We are pure virgins who are betrothed to Jesus. This means that in our present walk with Jesus we are considered His Bride. What an honor to be the Bride of Christ!
- Just as a marriage between a man and a woman is a covenant relationship, we are not just bound to Jesus by a contract; we are bound to Him by a blood covenant—the New Covenant.
- In a world where so many people struggle to know who they are, we can rest in our identity as the Bride of Christ.

4. Jesus is not just our Savior—He is our Bridegroom.

- In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus referred to Himself as a Bridegroom four times in thirteen verses. This in itself suggests the significance of Jesus as a Bridegroom.
- Jesus is coming back to judge the nations. He is returning to establish His kingdom and to rule the earth. But He is also coming back as a Bridegroom for a Bride.
- For the end-time Church to transition into a worthy Bride, believers need a revelation of Jesus as a Bridegroom God.
- Many believers only think of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They are happy enough to have a ticket to heaven and assurance that they will be escaping hell. They only view Jesus as a Savior who bore their sins on the cross.
- Though knowing Jesus as a Savior is vital to our eternal destiny, the parable of the ten virgins teaches that Jesus will be revealed as a
In one of the most profound yet simplest truths in the Bible, John wrote, “We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

This verse shows us that it takes God to love God. We can’t love Jesus as a Bride unless we first know His love for us as a Bridegroom.

Jesus is not just a Savior, King, Judge, and Warrior. He is a Bridegroom who has deep affection, passionate love, and jealous desire for us as His blood-bought Bride.

Paul prayed that the Ephesians—and all the saints—would “be able to comprehend...the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:17-19).

To know the infinite love of Jesus the Bridegroom, which surpasses knowledge, requires a spirit of revelation.

In our minds, we know that Jesus loves us. We can quote the Scriptures and sing the songs. However, until the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus as a Bridegroom and communicates His burning love for us, we don’t really know God’s love. Knowing the infinite and passionate love of the Bridegroom takes revelation knowledge.

As we grow in the revelation of Jesus as a Bridegroom, it awakens love in our hearts for Him. As we discover that God takes great delight in us and desires us just as we are, it fills us with confidence and enables us to rest in His love.

In one of the most amazing statements that Jesus ever made, He told His disciples, “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love” (John 15:9). Jesus loves us in the same way that the Father loves Him.

The wise virgins are seeking the Bridegroom because they have experienced the love of Jesus in a real and tangible way. They have felt His embrace in their weakness. They have felt His desire for them even though they are scarred by fears and failures. And they have encountered His smile even though they are ensnared by sins and shortcomings.

The revelation of Jesus as a Bridegroom God who is passionately pursuing us as His cherished Bride awakens love in our hearts and inspires us to spend the time and energy required to purchase oil for our lamps.

5. The wise virgins purchased enough oil to keep their lamps burning.

Because we have been betrothed to Jesus as His Bride, we now live in The Preparation Period of an ancient Jewish wedding. Jesus has gone back to His Father’s house to prepare a place for us (John 14:3) and we are called to wait expectantly for His return, to make ourselves ready, to prepare our wedding garments, and to be consecrated as we look forward to our life together with our Bridegroom.

The parable of the ten virgins instructs us how we should wait for the Bridegroom’s return during The Preparation Period.

In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus revealed that five waited wisely and five waited foolishly.

Both sets of virgins took lamps with them, but the light of the foolish
The most important thing for us to understand about the parable of the ten virgins is that we need more oil. Wise virgins are those who make sure they have plenty of oil to keep their lamps burning.

The oil represents the activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives as He prepares us for the marriage supper of the Lamb (1 Sam. 16:23; Matt. 25:10; 1 John 2:20, 27; Rev. 19:7-8).

This kind of oil only comes out an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 25:12; 2 Cor. 13:14). Thus, it is the oil of intimacy that will make us ready as a worthy Bride for Jesus.

Paul said that through the Holy Spirit we can know “the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). We don’t have to wait until we die and go to heaven to experience the deep things of God’s heart. As we walk intimately with the Holy Spirit, we can know and experience the depths of God’s heart now.

As we pursue intimacy with the Holy Spirit and yield ourselves to Him, our lamps will be filled with oil, we will have bright and shining lamps, and we will be ready for the Bridegroom when He returns.

If we want to be prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb, we must discover how to purchase oil. Purchasing oil will cost us time, money, and even friends. Yet the rewards for having oil cannot even compare to the small price that we have to pay.

The wise virgins knew the expensive cost of oil, but they considered being eternally prepared for Jesus worth any price they had to pay.

6. The wise virgins made intimacy with the Lord their highest priority.

When the foolish virgins desired to come into the wedding, Jesus said to them, “I do not know you” (Matt. 25:12). An omniscient God knows everything and everybody. However, only those who truly love Jesus are known by Him in an intimate way.

The foolish virgins had exchanged an intimate relationship with Jesus for other things—most likely good things, such as a ministry, family, or career.

The foolish virgins did not make knowing God their number one priority.

In the same way a marriage is destroyed by a lack of intimacy, those who do not pursue intimacy with God will suffer loss throughout eternity.

The foolish virgins did not have an intimate relationship with the Lord, and as a result, were denied entrance into the wedding.

The foolish virgins are those who did not love Jesus as their first love. We can be saved and lose our first love.

Paul told the Corinthians, “If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him” (1 Cor. 8:3). This verse parallels what Jesus told the foolish virgins when He said, “I do not know You.” Because the foolish virgins did not make God their all-consuming passion, Jesus did not know them intimately.

However, the opposite is also true. When we love God with all of our being, we are known by Jesus in an intimate way.
The wise virgins possessed a treasure that the foolish virgins lacked—they knew the Bridegroom intimately.

The oil of intimacy is a priceless commodity that we must buy for ourselves. We cannot purchase oil from anyone but God.

7. **The wife of the Lamb makes herself ready.**

- In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus said that while the foolish went to purchase more oil, “the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut” (Matt. 25:10).
- Notice that the only ones permitted to go through the door into the wedding feast were “those who were ready.”
- John wrote about the same concept in the book of Revelation when he said, “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7, NKJV).
- Just like a bride in an ancient Jewish wedding made her own dress, carefully stitching it together and looking over it carefully for stains or wrinkles, we must do the same.
- With this in mind, the parable of the wedding feast makes more sense to us. In this parable, we see that a man was invited to the wedding and he said “yes” to the invitation. But when he tried to come to the wedding feast, he was denied access because he was not dressed in wedding clothes (Matt. 22:11-13).
- Imagine for a moment how a bridegroom in the ancient Jewish culture would feel if he showed up to take his bride to the wedding and she did not have on wedding clothes. What if she was dressed in normal attire or if her wedding garments were only partially complete? We can assume that the bridegroom would be hurt because it would reveal that the bride did not truly love him and that she did not take her wedding serious.
- Just like a bride in an ancient Jewish wedding made her own dress, we are called to make ourselves ready. We must make our own dress and put on our wedding clothes by living in obedience to the Holy Spirit.
- Revelation 19:8 states, “It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”
- Notice that the “fine linen” is the “righteous acts of the saints.” In other words, the material of our wedding dress is the Spirit-led works that we do out of passionate love for God. Just like an ancient Jewish bride, we have to make our own wedding dress through our “righteous acts.”
- If we lose our first love and grow lukewarm, then the works we do will be burned up and we will be naked. That is why Jesus warned us to put on wedding clothes so that we would not be naked at the judgment seat of Christ (Rev. 3:4-5, 17-18, 16:15).
- To transition into a worthy Bride for Jesus, we must say “yes” to the invitation and put on our wedding clothes by making ourselves ready.
Though every born-again believer is betrothed to Jesus as a bride, only those who make themselves ready will be His wife for all eternity.

Notice that the Lord does not make us ready—we make ourselves ready. If we do not make ourselves ready, we will also be foolish virgins and the door to the wedding will be shut on us.

8. The end-time Church will be watching for the Bridegroom’s return.

- Jesus concluded the parable of the ten virgins by exhorting us to "watch" (Matt. 25:13, NKJV).
- It is important that we learn how to watch. If we neglect this warning, we could squander our inheritance like the foolish virgins.
- During the Bridegroom’s delay, the foolish virgins did not use wisdom. Instead of waiting for the Lord with expectancy, hunger, passion, and alertness, they grew lazy and lukewarm. As a result, they forfeited the opportunity to go through the door into the wedding.
- So what does it mean to watch? Watching is keeping our spirit alert and hungry for the presence of the Holy Spirit. Watching involves focusing our heart upon Jesus and not allowing ourselves to be entangled with passivity, apathy, complacency, or indifference.
- Watching is a major part of prayer. Jesus told the disciples to "watch and pray" (Matt. 26:41). During prayer, we watch by remaining alert, active, and focused.
- Watching involves fighting off passivity, apathy, slumber, and laziness as we wait for God to speak. Watching keeps our spirit ready to receive from God as we rest in His presence.
- Watching for the Bridegroom’s return is a critical activity of the end-time Church. This is how we fellowship with the Holy Spirit, how we purchase more oil for our lamp, and how we keep our passion for Jesus burning.

The Spirit and the Bride Say Come

1. Revelation 22:17 is one of the most informative and significant end-time prophecies in the Bible.

- This short statement reveals four significant things about the end-time Church.

1. The Church will have an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit.
2. The Church will be established in her identity as the Bride of Christ.
3. The Church will be engaged in intercession.
4. Jesus will be urged to return to the earth by His lovesick Bride.
2. Revelation 22:17 will result in the second coming of Christ.

- When the Church is fully established in her bridal identity and completely in unity with the Holy Spirit, this prayer will literally result in the second coming of Christ.
- Like we saw in Session 1, we are exhorted to be “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God” (2 Peter 3:12).
- One of the ways that we can speed up the second coming of Christ is to ask for Jesus, our Bridegroom God, to return.
- As the Church around the world becomes fully established in her bridal identity and is in complete unity with the Holy Spirit, this prayer for Jesus to come will move the Father to say, “Son, go get your Bride.”

Becoming a worthy Bride for Jesus is a major end-time theme. Jesus will have a prepared Bride who loves Him with passion and partners with Him in the end times and for all eternity. To transition into a worthy Bride, we must:

1. Say “yes” to the invitation to be His Bride;
2. Make ourselves ready;
3. Put on our wedding clothes;
4. Pay the price for the oil of intimacy;
5. Watch for the Bridegroom’s return;
6. Cry out for Jesus to return.
**Review Questions**

**True or False**

_____ 1. The parable of the ten virgins is not related to the end times.

_____ 2. Every believer is a pure virgin who is betrothed to Jesus.

_____ 3. In God’s sovereignty, He will make us ready as the Bride of Christ.

_____ 4. The foolish virgins are unbelievers, not Christians.

_____ 5. Getting more oil is a critical part of becoming a worthy Bride for Jesus.

_____ 6. Jesus will not return until His Bride urges Him to come back.

_____ 7. The wise virgins knew the importance of advancing the kingdom and, therefore, made that their top priority.

_____ 8. For the end-time Church to transition into a worthy Bride, believers need a revelation of Jesus as a Bridegroom God.

_____ 9. Getting more oil is a quick and inexpensive process.

**Fill in the blanks**

10. The end-time Church will be ______________ for the Bridegroom’s return.

11. The foolish virgins did not make ______________ with God their number one priority.

12. The ones who make themselves _____________ will be given wedding garments of fine linen, __________ and ____________.

13. The five phases of the ancient Jewish wedding system are:

   1) __________
   2) __________
   3) ___________ __________
   4) ___________ __________
   5) ___________ __________

14. Revelation __:__ is one of the most informative and significant end-time prophecies in the Bible.
From the choices on the right, put the way we transition into a worthy Bride in the blanks on the left.

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Possible Matches for 15-20

a. Give to missions on a regular basis.
b. Say "yes" to the invitation to be His Bride.
c. Preach the gospel of the kingdom in the nations.
d. Make ourselves ready.
e. Pay the price for the oil of intimacy.
f. Witness to friends and neighbors about Christ.
g. Cry out for Jesus to return.
h. Pray for Israel’s restoration.
i. Watch for the Bridegroom’s return.
j. Put on our wedding clothes.
The Overcoming Sons of God

This session covers:

- How the Church will come to full maturity as Christ-like sons
- The call to become an overcoming son of God
- Seven things that we must overcome in order to possess our full eternal inheritance

This session corresponds to:

- Session 10, Part 1 and Part 2 of Prophetic Vision for the End Times CDs

Mature Sons in the End Times

1. The parable of the wheat and the tares reveals the dynamics of the end-time harvest.

   - Jesus told His disciples a prophetic parable about the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). This parable reveals the dynamics of the end-time harvest and is crucial for us to understand.
   - Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed. While the good seed was being sown, the enemy also sowed tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:24-25).
   - Explaining this parable, Jesus said that the good seed are the “sons of the kingdom” while the tares are the “sons of the evil one” (Matt. 13:38).
   - Adding more insight to this prophetic parable, Jesus said that the “harvest is the end of the age” (Matt. 13:39).
   - In this parable, Jesus revealed that both lawlessness and righteousness will reach full maturity at the end
of the age. Though the world will descend into deep darkness, the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the glory of their Father (Matt. 13:43).

2. The end-time harvest involves the Church coming to full maturity as Christ-like sons.

- When people think about the end-time harvest, their first thought is about millions of people all around the world coming to faith in Christ. They think about the Holy Spirit’s power coming upon the Church like never before and the unprecedented miracles that will take place through the hands of the Body of Christ.
- Though all of this is a significant part of the end-time harvest, it also includes believers fully maturing into Christ-like sons.
- Before the Lord returns, the Father will conform us “to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29).
- The Father earnestly desires “sons of the kingdom” who are humble, meek, obedient, loving, and powerful (Matt. 13:38).
- The Father wants sons who do not love their lives, even unto death; sons who can be glorified with God’s own glory and reflect the beauty of God back to Him (Rev. 12:11).
- At the end of the age, the Father will bring many sons to glory who will shine like the sun in its strength (Heb. 2:10; Matt. 13:43).
- Paul said, “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19).
- What is true about Christ, God wants to be true about us. We are invited to be “fellow heirs with Christ,” which means that we are called to rule and reign with Christ in the fullness of the Father’s glory forever.

To become a “son of the kingdom” who matures into Christ-likeness and shines in the glory of the Father, we must become overcomers.

The Overcomers in the Book of Revelation

1. The book of Revelation calls the Church to overcome in the end times.

- The book of Revelation makes it clear that there is a war going on in the spirit realm between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. This is a war for the hearts of mankind and to determine who will rule the earth. Every believer is involved in this war. We will either overcome or be overcome. There is no neutral ground.
- The call to overcome is one of the predominant themes in the book of Revelation. The Greek word translated overcome or overcame is *ni-*
**kaoo** (nik-ah'-o), which means to conquer absolutely, to carry off the victory, or to come off victorious. This definition indicates that there is some type of struggle one engages in and endures through on the road to victory.

- The Greek word **nikaoo** is used seventeen times in the book of Revelation. Eight times, or almost half the time, this word is used to call believers to overcome some type of struggle, entanglement, or sin.

- For example, this word is used to call believers to overcome losing their first love, the works of Jezebel, spiritual slumber, and lukewarm love (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7).

- In four instances, this word is used to show that someone has overcome. For example, Jesus overcame, sat down on His Father’s throne, and received the right to break the seven-sealed scroll (Rev. 3:21; 5:5). In the future, the saints will overcome the dragon by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives unto death (Rev. 12:11). They will also overcome the Antichrist and the dragon through martyrdom and will worship God on the sea of glass (Rev. 15:2).

- In each case, there is one thing that stands out—overcomers do not love their own lives. They love God more than they love themselves. They want to do the will of God more than they want comfort, honor, fame, and fortune. They want to please God more than they want to gratify their flesh.

- Overcomers are people of humility and meekness who have learned to take up their cross and follow Jesus. They endure through tribulations and trials without quitting. They do not tolerate the works of darkness and will die for the cause of Christ if necessary. They stay awake, alert, and remain on fire for God by resisting all forms of complacency.

- The call to overcome is a call to every believer to prevail over the enemy through aggressive determination and spiritual violence (Matt. 11:12). It is a call to defeat, conquer, subdue, and vanquish everything that stands in the way of God’s highest and best.

- The call to overcome is an invitation to possess our full eternal inheritance which is freely offered to us through the blood of Jesus.

2. **Only the overcomers will be sons of God and will possess their full eternal inheritance.**

- At the end of the book of Revelation, the Father says, “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son” (Rev. 21:7). Notice carefully that the promise to be God’s son and to receive the full eternal inheritance is only given to those who overcome.

- Paul said to the Galatians and Romans: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26) and “All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

- Putting all three of these verses together, we see that we are called as sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. However, who we are by calling is different than who we are in reality. Yes, we are sons by call-
ing, but we are not sons in reality until we overcome by living in obedience to the promptings of the Spirit.

- Paul said, “As long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father” (Gal. 4:1-2). This shows us that we do not receive our inheritance until we mature as a son.

- There is a vast difference between a child of God and a son of God. Receiving forgiveness for our sins is a wonderful blessing, but it is only the beginning of our journey.

- A child, though dearly loved by his Father, is immature and unable to handle all that God has for him. A son, on the other hand, is seasoned, wise, humble, and mature. Sons are able to handle the wonderful inheritance that God has for them.

- The call to overcome, therefore, is a call to mature as a son so that we can receive our full eternal inheritance.

3. Revelation 2-3 highlights the full eternal inheritance reserved for the overcomers.

- To inspire believers to overcome, Jesus spoke directly to seven first-century churches that had issues which would be common to all believers throughout history—especially to the end-time generation.

- When Jesus addressed the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, He affirmed them for their faithfulness, rebuked them for their compromise, exhorted them to repent, promised eternal rewards if they overcame, and revealed certain aspects of His glory in order to release grace for victorious living.

- Understanding the historical context of each of the seven churches is important because it helps us extract the eternal principles that lead us to victory in the end times.

- Revelation 19:7 states, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”

- How will the Bride make herself ready? By “keep[ing] the words of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:7, NKJV)—especially what Jesus spoke to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3.

- As we examine Revelation 2-3, we see that believers are invited to share in Jesus’ inheritance.

- For example, when Jesus spoke to the church of Thyatira, He encouraged them to overcome the works of Jezebel by offering them the reward of ruling the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:26-27). This is an exact quote from Psalm 2—a prophecy about the end of the age that describes how the Messiah will “break them [the Gentiles nations] with a rod of iron” and “shatter them like earthenware” when He rules the nations from Jerusalem (Ps. 2:9).

- This Psalm is about Jesus possessing the nations as His inheritance and the ends of the earth as His possession during His millennial reign (Ps. 2:8).

- When Jesus spoke to the church of Thyatira, He revealed that all be-
lievers could share in His inheritance.

- In Revelation 2-3 we see the eternal inheritance that Jesus offered to the overcomers. This includes:
  - The right to eat from the tree of life (Rev. 2:7);
  - The crown of life (Rev. 2:10);
  - Increased intimacy and revelation along with great honor and special privileges in the Millennial Kingdom and for all eternity (Rev. 2:17);
  - Authority to rule the nations with a rod of iron in the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 2:26-28);
  - Wedding clothes for the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 3:4-5);
  - Permanent access to dwell in God’s throne room and to have a position of honor in the kingdom of God (Rev. 3:12);
  - Sitting down with Jesus on His throne and governing the universe in partnership with Him (Rev. 3:21).

- The Bible says that we are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). Although every believer is called to share in the inheritance of Christ, only the overcomers will receive the full eternal inheritance (Rev. 21:7).

- Only the overcomers will be fully qualified co-heirs with Christ. These will be full of the Father’s glory and will reign with Him over all nations.

In Revelation 2-3, we see seven common issues that we must overcome to receive our full eternal inheritance.

Seven Things We Must Overcome

1. We must overcome losing our first love.

- The first thing that we must overcome is losing our first love. This was Jesus’ message to the church of Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7).
- Ephesus was the largest city of the Roman province of Asia Minor with a population of 250,000 people. This city was a major center for idolatry and had one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—a 425-foot long by 220-foot wide temple dedicated to the goddess Diana. At this temple, religious and sexual immorality thrived.
- The silversmith trade was prosperous because of the demand for gold, silver, and bronze idols of Diana to be used as one’s household idol (Acts 19:25).
- The church of Ephesus was one of the most well-respected and influential churches in the ancient world. In fact, this church was an evangelistic center that influenced much of Asia, serving as a lampstand...
Paul established this church on his third missionary journey (Acts 19-20) and used it as his ministry base for three years (Acts 20:31). In Ephesus, the worshipers of Diana became such passionate lovers of Jesus that the market for purchasing idols was significantly reduced (Acts 19:13-20).

The believers at Ephesus were faithful, hardworking, and they hated evil. They endured intense spiritual warfare and did not give into temptation. They loved the truth and did not tolerate false doctrine and the spread of heresy.

In spite of all these commendable qualities, the believers at Ephesus allowed their love for Jesus to grow cold. They quit spending time in God’s presence and listening to His voice. Ministry slowly interrupted their devotional life until it was no longer a high priority. They were more preoccupied with the work of the Lord than the Lord of the work.

Jesus told them, “But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent” (Rev. 2:4-5).

Losing our first love is a form of idolatry. We commit idolatry by allowing anything—even good things—to come before our relationship with God. God wants to be first in our schedules, finances, thoughts, and desires.

There is nothing more serious to God than misplaced priorities. When Jesus becomes a secondary priority in our life and we place other things above Him—no matter how good, necessary, and honorable—there are serious consequences.

Because our first and highest calling is to minister to the Lord, the enemy is actively working to distract us from pure and simple devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). The devil will use anything—including work, ministry, family, or recreation—to keep us from an intimate relationship with the Lord.

Notice that Jesus told the Ephesians to “remember from where you have fallen.” Many people are surprised when well-respected and influential leaders in the Body of Christ commit adultery or mishandle money. Though grievous sins, these are usually the result of allowing their love for Jesus to grow cold. In God’s eyes, we fall from a high place when we lose our first love.

We are called to repent of losing our first love, overcome everything that would distract us from an intimate relationship with Jesus, and to devote ourselves to listening to His words (Luke 10:38-42).

The Greek word for repent in this passage means “a change of mind.” True repentance, therefore, begins with a mindset change and ends with bearing fruit “in keeping with repentance” (Luke 3:8).

We have truly repented from losing our first love when we make spending time in the Lord’s presence our highest priority in life. This means that we must rearrange our schedules, get up a little earlier, turn off the T.V., and cancel some other less important events.

Before the Lord returns, the Father will lead the Church back to the
joy of first love. The Bride of Christ will rediscover how to delight in God and how to drink from the river of God’s pleasures (Ps. 36:8; 37:4).

- As we come back to our first love, we will discover that pure, simple, and raw love for Jesus satisfies our hearts like nothing else.
- The ones who overcome losing their first love will be allowed “to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).
- Unfortunately, the church of Ephesus neglected this challenging re- bucke over time and this once influential lampstand eventually went out. Islam is now the predominate religion in this region.

2. We must overcome fear, afflictions, trials, and tribulations.

- The second thing that we must overcome is fear, afflictions, trials, and tribulations. This was Jesus’ message to the church of Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11).
- Smyrna means “bitter” and “myrrh.” Myrrh was used for embalming and is symbolic of death.
- Bitter and death were appropriate words to describe the severe persecution, hardships, and even martyrdom that the believers encountered in Smyrna.
- Because of Smyrna’s close ties with Rome, the city was very enthusiastic about worshiping the Roman emperor. Domitian (A.D. 81-96) made emperor worship a requirement for every Roman citizen. Failure to comply with this law meant death. This explains why conditions were so severe for the believers at Smyrna.
- Jesus’ message to the church of Smyrna—and to us—is that we must overcome every trial and tribulation that comes against us by choosing not to fear and by remaining faithful to God.
- Because we live in a fallen world, there are trials and tribulations in the earth. No matter what comes against us, we must press through and overcome the work of the devil. God does not test anyone (James 1:12-14), but He allows trials and tribulations to refine our faith (1 Peter 1:6-9; 4:12).
- In the end times, the world and the Church will go through the worst time of distress and persecution in history. In spite of these afflictions, there will be overcomers like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who will choose to go through the furnace of affliction rather than bow down to another god.
- Though we are refined by fire, we must “be faithful until death” in order to receive the “crown of life” (Isa. 48:10; Rev. 2:10).
- Jesus specifically told the church at Smyrna, “Do not fear” (Rev. 2:10). A significant part of overcoming is to repent of being cowardly and to live with strength and courage in the face of fear.
- Overcomers persevere through trials and tribulations—choosing to die, if necessary, rather than compromise their convictions.
- To those who overcome fear, trials, and tribulations, Jesus promises “the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). There are two Greek words for crown in the New Testament. One is the crown of a ruler (diadem) and the other is the crown of a victor who won a race in the Greek athletic
games (stephanos).

- The Greek word for the crown of life is stephanos, meaning that it is a crown given specifically to those who overcome and win the victory over fear, trials, and tribulations.
- The crown of life is given to the overcomers who remain “faithful until death.”

3. **We must overcome compromise with the world.**

- The third thing that we must overcome is compromise with the world. This was Jesus’ message to the church of Pergamum (Rev. 2:12-17).
- Pergamum was a wealthy city that had many temples devoted to idol worship. In fact, it was the first city in Asia to have a temple devoted to worshiping the Roman emperor. Because Caesar-worship was highly regarded and enforced by law, the Christians in Pergamum were in constant danger. This explains Jesus’ commendation to them when He said,

  I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells (Rev. 2:13).

- Although the church of Pergamum held fast to the name of Christ and did not deny the faith, there was false teaching in this church that led to sexual immorality and idol worship. Because of this, Jesus exhorted them to overcome this defiling influence.
- Jesus’ message to the church of Pergamum—and to us—is that we must overcome compromise with the world and repent for accepting a false message of grace.
- Looking at the Church today, many believers adhere to the world’s values, lifestyle, and culture. Addictions, rebellion, dishonesty, materialism, vanity, immorality, and homosexuality are rampant in the Church. Often, the only difference between a believer and an unbeliever is that a believer sits in a religious service for one hour a week.
- In our seeker-friendly church cultures, sin is not called sin but weakness. Compromising believers are rarely confronted because pastors and leaders are more concerned with church growth and finances than with the purity and holiness of their people. As a result, there is not much difference between the Church and the world.
- To be an overcomer, we must allow the Spirit of God to reveal and remove any area where we have compromised with the world. Our values, beliefs, and lifestyle need to be shaped by the Word of God rather than the spirit of the age.
- We must also repent for tolerating a false form of grace that teaches liberties which lead to lawlessness. Sin has serious eternal consequences. Grace is not an excuse for sin—it is the power to overcome sin.
- For those who overcome compromise with the world and false doctrines of grace, God promises to give them deeper revelation, greater
intimacy with Him, and special privileges in the age to come (Rev. 2:17).

- Jesus said, “To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it” (Rev. 2:17).

- The hidden manna is deep revelation that comes out of intimacy with God and is the result of dinning with Jesus in His Word and fellowshipping with His Spirit (Matt. 4:4; Rev. 3:20). In addition, the hidden manna probably refers to participating in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).

- In the days of the Roman Empire, white stones were given as awards to honor those who offered valiant service to the community, in battle, or who were victorious in an athletic game. Those who received the white stones were given special privileges and were given admission to special events, including the games and feasts hosted by the Roman Empire.

- Therefore, the white stone probably refers to admittance to the marriage supper of the Lamb and special honor and privileges in Jesus’ Millennial government.

- The “new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it” reflects our unique relationship with Jesus. It will characterize who we are, how we lived our lives in the secret place with Jesus, and how we will function in eternity.

4. We must overcome Jezebel’s works, character, and influence in our sphere of authority.

- The fourth thing that we must overcome is the works, character, and influence of Jezebel. This was Jesus’ message to the church of Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29).

- Thyatira was the smallest of the seven cities but it received the longest of the seven messages.

- Thyatira was prosperous because of the city’s famous craftsmen’s guilds. These were unions of men in similar crafts or trades who upheld certain standards and protected the members of the union. These trade guilds were very similar to the labor unions that are common in our day.

- As a communications center, Thyatira had become a commercial city with more trade guilds than any other city. There were guilds for wool workers, linen workers, manufactures of outer garments, dyers, leather workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave dealers, and bronze smiths.

- Pagan worship thrived in Thyatira because each trade guild had its own guardian god and every guild member was expected to attend the guild festivals and eat the food which had been offered to their god.

- After the feast, the people would participate in gross immoral activities, including drunkenness and sexual immorality. If someone left during these activities, they would be ridiculed and suffer other forms of persecution, including the loss of prosperous business opportuni-
In the midst of such an idolatrous and immoral culture, Jesus commended the church at Thyatira for its increase in ministry, their vibrant faith, and unlike the church at Ephesus, their love for Him (Rev. 2:19).

The issue at Thyatira, which Jesus addressed, was their lack of zeal for moral and doctrinal purity. Jesus rebuked them for tolerating idol worship and sexual immorality.

Jesus told the church at Thyatira, “I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols” (Rev. 2:20).

Jesus used the name Jezebel as a symbolic name for a woman in the church of Thyatira who was a false teacher and prophetess.

Jesus used the Old Testament Jezebel, the wife of Ahab who was responsible for causing the Northern Kingdom of Israel to worship Baal and Asherah and to engage in sexual immorality and witchcraft (1 Kings 18–2 Kings 9), as a symbol of what we must overcome in the end times.

The Jezebel at Thyatira claimed to have special revelations from God and even called herself a prophetess. Because of her super-spiritual and charismatic personality, the church leaders gave her authority to teach and she led many into idolatry and sexual immorality.

The particular thrust of Jezebel’s teaching was probably something like this: “Since an idol has no real existence (cf. 1 Cor. 8:4), you need not hesitate to go along with the simple requirements of the trade guild and participate in a common meal dedicated to some idol.”

Because the trade guilds dominated the economic life of this city, believers in Thyatira constantly faced the dilemma of compromise or loss of business opportunities. The Jezebel at Thyatira was most likely teaching these believers a false form of grace that permitted them to participate in the guild festivals, especially for the prosperity of their business.

In the words of Jesus, this teaching seduced “My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols” (Rev. 2:20, NKJV). This false teaching of flesh-indulging liberties gave Jezebel a growing influence in Thyatira.

In this church there were two types of people—those who were participating in her immorality and those who tolerated her evil deeds and gave her authority to minister (Rev. 2:23-24).

Jesus’ message to the church of Thyatira—and to us—is that we must overcome Jezebel’s works, character, and influence in our sphere of authority.

First, we must overcome Jezebel’s works of idolatry, sexual immorality, and subtly compromises.

In the church today we have so many invisible idols. Our idols are usually not made of gold, silver, and bronze; they are things like worshipping a docile form of Jesus who excuses sin and gives liberty to indulge the flesh, false doctrines that promote greed and materialism, and idolizing prominent and anointed leaders in the church. We must
repent of every form of idol worship and return back to our first love.

- Sexual immorality is on the rise in the church and we are tolerating it in the name of grace, acceptance, and liberty. We must repent of all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, sensuality, pornography, homosexuality, and lust. Jesus said that if we even look at a woman with lust—whether on T.V., the internet, or in real life—that we have already committed adultery with her in our hearts (Matt. 5:28).

- Second, we must overcome Jezebel’s character. The Old Testament Jezebel was an arrogant, proud, rebellious, controlling, lustful, independent, and sensuous queen who practiced witchcraft and seduced Israel away from God into spiritual adultery.

- Overcomers must repent of Jezebel’s character and walk in the exact opposite of her nature, choosing to be humble, meek, submitted to authority, pure, and Christ-exalting.

- Third, we must overcome Jezebel’s influence in our sphere of authority, which includes our heart, home, church, business, city, and nation. We cannot give Jezebel an inch. We must hate her works of witchcraft and sensuality. We must resist her seduction, control, and rebellion. And we must cleanse ourselves from her abominable defilements.

- The church at Thyatira did not hate lawlessness and evil—they tolerated it. Instead of resisting the evil influence of Jezebel, they were passive, allowing her to seduce God’s bond-servants into immorality and idolatry (Rev. 2:20).

- Overcomers are called to resist every work of darkness, including pride, rebellion, control, witchcraft, idolatry, sensuality, and sexual immorality.

- The believers who overcome the works, character, and influence of Jezebel will be given authority to rule the nations with a rod of iron in the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 2:26-27).

5. We must overcome spiritual slumber and apathy.

- The fifth thing that we must overcome is spiritual slumber and apathy. This was Jesus’ message to the church of Sardis (Rev. 3:2-6).

- Sardis was located on a hill with an elongated plateau and steep sides. This made Sardis an almost impregnable military fortress. Though an ideal stronghold, its location limited the growth of the city.

- At the peak of its glory, Sardis was a city that was wealthy and virtually unconquerable. By the time the book of Revelation was written, however, Sardis’ glory was in the past.

- The church of Sardis, like the city, gloried in its past. That is why Jesus said to them, “I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God” (Rev. 3:1-2).

- The church of Sardis, like the city, was safe and comfortable. As a result, they grew complacent and fell asleep. By the time Jesus addressed them, they were spiritually dead. In this church, there was no
life, no freshness, no growth, and no anointing of the Holy Spirit. Because of their history and reputation, they mistakenly thought that their works were acceptable to God.

- The message to Sardis—and to us—is that we cannot rely on our past accomplishments in God. We must wake up and repent of all spiritual slumber, apathy, and complacency. Furthermore, we must strengthen what remains because we have many more things to accomplish for God.

- If we have accomplished great things for God in the past, it is very easy to become complacent and not press on toward the high calling of God. Maybe God has used us to lead hundreds or thousands to Christ. Perhaps we have gone on mission trips to Africa and India to equip leaders and pastors. We might be a successful preacher, worship leader, author, or prayer leader. Or God could have used us to start a city-wide revival.

- No matter what good things we have done for God in the past, we can’t glory in this and grow complacent. Complacency will cast us into a deep sleep that will ultimately result in dead works, dead religion, and dead traditions. That is why we must repent of complacency and press on to the high calling of God.

- Because the church of Sardis grew complacent and fell asleep, their wedding clothes were soiled and stained. In the eyes of God, they were not worthy to be the wife of the Lamb for all eternity (Rev. 3:4).

- Proverbs 19:15 states, “Laziness casts into a deep sleep” (Prov. 19:15). When we become lazy in our walk with God and stop practicing the spiritual disciplines of the faith—such as prayer, worship, reading the Bible, and fasting—it can quickly cast us into a deep sleep.

- To those who did not wake up, Jesus warned that His coming would be like a thief in the night (Rev. 3:3). To the slumbering believer, Jesus’ coming will take away everything that they have worked hard to achieve. At the judgment seat of Christ, their works will be burned and their rewards forfeited.

- Much of the Church is currently sound asleep. If they don’t wake up, they will be unprepared for the end times, the second coming of Christ, and for eternity.

- The overcomer is called to wake up, stay awake, and remain alert. Overcomers cannot be lazy, undisciplined, or indifferent.

- For the believers who are diligent to keep themselves awake, the Lord will give them wedding clothes that are clean, pure, and white (Rev. 3:4-5). These wedding clothes will be the pure robes of righteousness, the bridal garments that are without spot, stain, or wrinkle (Rev. 19:7-8).

6. We must live as overcomers until Jesus returns.

- The sixth thing that we must do is to live as overcomers until Jesus returns. This was Jesus’ message to the church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13).

- Philadelphia’s name was chosen to honor Attalus II’s loyalty to his older brother, Eumenes II, king of Lydia. The name Philadelphia
means “brotherly love.”

- Philadelphia was an important and wealthy trade center. As the coast cities declined, Philadelphia grew in power and retained its importance even until late Byzantine times. The imperial route from Rome passed through Philadelphia, giving it the name “the gateway to the east” and making it an important financial city.

- Philadelphia and Smyrna were the only churches that Jesus did not rebuke.

- The church of Philadelphia operated in the power of the Holy Spirit, faithfully obeyed God’s Word, and did not deny the name of Jesus in spite of great religious persecution (Rev. 3:8).

- The message to the church of Philadelphia—and to us—is to live as overcomers until Jesus returns.

- Jesus said, “I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown” (Rev. 3:11).

- Since the church of Philadelphia had already overcome, their challenge was to maintain their victorious lifestyle until Jesus returned. They had to “hold fast what [they had].”

- The Greek word for “hold fast” is kráteo and it means “to have power, be powerful, to be chief, be master of, to rule, to get possession of, to obtain, to take hold of, to lay hold of, to hold in the hand, to hold fast, and to continue to hold, to retain.”

- In summary, holding fast means that we have the power to overcome and the fortitude to maintain our victory until the end.

- Jesus warned the believers at Philadelphia that they could forfeit their reward if they lost their diligent pursuit of God and their disciplined obedience to His Word. They had to hold fast in the areas where they had overcome so that no one could take their victors’ crown.

- John wrote, “Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully” (2 John 7-8, NIV).

- To have our fullest reward, we must hold on to the same measure of obedience that we are currently walking in or have previously walked in.

- Holding fast, or maintaining an overcoming life, is a great challenge. If we are living as overcomers, the great temptation is to get complacent, relax, and not press on with the same intensity, hunger, and focus that we once did. Overcomers must live an overcoming lifestyle for the rest of their lives.

- Overcoming is not something that we do for a year or two. It is lifestyle that we maintain until Jesus returns. The overcomer is one who sustains mature obedience to Jesus until the end.

- To those who live as overcomers for the rest of their lives, Jesus promises to “make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name” (Rev. 3:12).

- A pillar bears the weight of a building and speaks of stability, firmness, beauty, and permanence. To be a “pillar in the temple” is to have a position of honor and authority in God’s throne room. All be-
lievers are part of God’s spiritual temple (Eph. 2:21-22), but some will be pillars who hold a special position of authority, responsibility, and honor in the Millennium and for all eternity.

- The overcomers will also have God’s name written on them, the name of the new Jerusalem, and Jesus’ new name. This means that those who overcome will be marked as the Father’s and Jesus’ own possession and they will have authority in the new city Jerusalem.

7. We must overcome pride, indifference, and self-satisfaction.

- The seventh thing that we must overcome is pride, indifference, and self-satisfaction. This was Jesus’ message to the church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22).
- Laodicea was a prosperous commercial, financial, and manufacturing center, which allowed many of its citizens to become wealthy.
- The name Laodicea combines the two Greek words laos (“people”) and dikao (“rule”). Thus, Laodicea means “the people rule.”
- The name of this city accurately describes what the culture was like. It was secular, humanistic, self-centered, godless, and proud.
- Laodicea was located between two major cities—Hierapolis and Colosse. Hierapolis was noted for having hot, spring water whereas Colosse was noted for cool, life-giving water. As this water journeyed from Hierapolis to Colosse either overland or via an aqueduct, it lost some of its heat. By the time the water reached Laodicea, it was somewhere between hot and cold. Such tepid drinking water was sickening to drink on either a hot or cold day.
- This explains Jesus’ choice of words to the Laodiceans. He said, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth” (Rev. 3:15-16).
- Jesus warned the Laodiceans that they would be vomited out of His mouth if they did not repent of being lukewarm.
- To be lukewarm means that our love for Jesus is not burning with intensity, passion, and fervency. Lukewarm believers are those who have grown indifferent, complacent, apathetic, and passive in their relationship with Christ.
- Because the Laodiceans were wealthy, they became proud and self-satisfied. They boasted, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17).
- Lukewarm believers are spiritually sick. They have no appetite for the Word of God or thirst for the Holy Spirit. They are uninterested in prayer, worship, church attendance, outreach, or missions. Nor do they have a spiritual drive to fulfill the call of God and to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- When we fall into a lukewarm state, we are blinded to our true condition. Jesus told the Laodiceans, “You do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17).
- Jesus’ remedy for the lukewarm Laodiceans was to buy gold, garments, and eye salve. Jesus said, “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so
that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see” (Rev. 3:18).

- Gold refined by fire refers to being baptized with the fire of the Holy Spirit so that passion for Jesus burns in our hearts and burns away everything that hinders love. It also refers to having fire-tested faith that overcomes trials, tribulations, and tests (1 Pet. 1:7, 4:12).
- We purchase white garments by living a righteous, obedient life that is motivated by a burning passion for Jesus (Rev. 19:7-8).
- Undoubtedly, when Jesus exhorted the Laodiceans to have their eyes anointed with eye salve, he was referring to the powder that the Laodicea medical school was famous for producing. This eye salve helped cure people of eye disease.
- To have our eyes anointed with “eye salve” implies that we need our spiritual vision corrected so that we can see. This happens as the Holy Spirit gives us revelation of who Jesus really is, who we are called to be, what our current condition is like, and the amazing rewards that Jesus will give to us if we overcome.
- Though this message is the most severe rebuke of the seven churches, Jesus offered the Laodiceans the greatest reward for overcoming. For the believers who zealously repent of lukewarm love and self-satisfaction, Jesus invites them to “dine with him” (Rev. 3:20). Though this relates to having intimacy with the Lord in this life, it is also a reference to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).
- The most amazing promise offered to the overcomer is this: “I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21).
- The overcomers will sit down with Jesus on His throne and govern the universe with Him for all eternity.

Revelation 12:11 and 15:2 reveal that there will be believers in the end times who overcome the dragon (Satan) and the beast (Antichrist) by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives—even unto death. Undoubtedly, these will be overcomers because they repented in the areas where they had fallen short and they overcame losing their first love, trials and tribulations, compromise with the world, the works of Jezebel, spiritual apathy, slumber, complacency, indifference, and self-satisfaction. These overcomers will be the sons of God who will rule and reign with Christ and shine like the sun in the glory of their Father.
Notes


5. Ibid.


Review Questions

True or False

1. Every born-again believer will receive the same eternal inheritance.
2. The call to overcome is a major theme in the book of Revelation.
3. Jesus rebuked the church at Ephesus because they were asleep.
4. The church of Smyrna and Philadelphia were the only two churches not to be rebuked.
5. The church of Sardis and Laodicea were the only two churches not to be commended.
6. Ruling the nations is a reward offered to the overcomers.
7. Jesus gave the greatest rebuke to the church of Philadelphia.
8. Lukewarm means that we are afraid of pressing on to the high calling of God.

Fill in the blanks

9. Only the ____________ will be ________ of God and will possess their full eternal _____________.

10. There is a vast difference between a ____________ of God and a ____________ of God.

11. Losing our first love is a form of ____________.

12. The white stone probably refers to admittance to the ________ _________ of the Lamb and special ________ and _________ in Jesus’ Millennial government.

13. Jesus warned the believers at Philadelphia that they could forfeit their reward if they lost their ____________ ____________ of God and their ____________ ____________ ____________ to His Word.
Match the appropriate church on the right to what they had to overcome on the left.

____ 14. Pride, indifference, and self-satisfaction

____ 15. Spiritual slumber and apathy

____ 16. Losing first love

____ 17. Jezebel

____ 18. Fear, afflictions, trials, and tribulations

____ 19. Compromise with the world

____ 20. Live as overcomers until Jesus returns

Possible Matches for 14-20
a. Ephesus
b. Smyrna
c. Pergamum
d. Thyatira
e. Sardis
f. Philadelphia
g. Laodicea
The Judgment Seat of Christ

1. Every believer will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

- Paul wrote, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).
- Notice that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” Every believer will stand before Christ and give an account for the way they lived.
- At that time, we will be recompensed—or rewarded—for the works that we did while on earth.
- Jesus will evaluate our life based upon what we have “done.” The Greek word for done is prasso, which means “to practice, perform repeatedly or habitually.” That is why it is important to form Christ-exalting, kingdom-building habits now—before it’s too late.
2. **At the judgment seat of Christ our works will be tested by fire.**

- Paul wrote,

  > For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

- Let’s look at a few things from these verses.
- First, Jesus Christ is the foundation for all that we do. Our works will be evaluated on whether we built His kingdom or our own.
- Second, there are different types of building material that we use, ranging from gold to straw. Gold, silver, and precious stones are the building materials that will survive the fire whereas wood, hay, and straw will be incinerated. This implies that the Lord is looking at the quality of our work. He wants to know the motives behind our actions.
- Third, the fire of God will test the quality of each man's work. The quality will be evaluated based upon our motives (1 Cor. 4:5), our devotion to Christ, and whether or not our works were inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- Fourth, we will “receive a reward” for every work which was done with pure motives, because of our love for Jesus, and out of obedience to the Holy Spirit. We will talk about specific rewards later in this session, but the point here is that our works will be rewarded.
- Fifth, we can “suffer loss” at the judgment seat of Christ. Our works can be “burned up” if our motives were self-centered or we built our own kingdoms through selfish ambition.
- Sixth, the judgment seat of Christ does not determine whether we are going to heaven or hell. It determines our eternal rewards, such as our degree of intimacy, authority, and glory.

3. **Jesus will give rewards based upon our works.**

- Notice the following three Scriptures that describe Jesus giving rewards based upon our works:

  > And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth (Rev. 11:18).

  > Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done (Rev. 22:12).
For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS (Matt. 16:27).

- At the judgment seat of Christ, Jesus will “render to every man according to what he has done.” He will “repay every man according to his deeds.”
- At the judgment seat of Christ, the “prophets and the saints and those who fear [God’s] name, the small and the great” will be rewarded for the way they lived on earth.

4. The rewards given to the saints will be eternal and irreversible.

- The judgment seat of Christ will be an “eternal judgment” (Heb. 6:2). That is, there will be no reversing the decision.
- At the judgment seat of Christ, the rewards that we receive will be our lot for all eternity. Our rewards determine the way we spend eternity. Eternity will be better for some believers than for others.
- If our works are burned and we suffer loss, there will be no way to reverse this. If we are disqualified from receiving our fullest eternal inheritance—such as sitting with Jesus on His throne and ruling the nations with Christ—there will be no way to change this.
- The rewards given to the saints will be eternal and irreversible.

5. Our works follow us for all eternity.

- For all eternity, we will be known for the way we lived the seventy to eighty years of our life. Our “deeds follow with” us (Rev. 14:13).
- For all eternity, we will be known for building the kingdom with pure motives or for building our own empire out of selfish motives.
- The wedding garments that we will receive in heaven will testify to everyone how we lived our life on the earth. John wrote, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev. 19:7-8).
- Notice that “the fine linen” in which we will be clothed “is the righteous acts of the saints.” That is, our works which are not incinerated at the judgment seat of Christ will be our clothing for all eternity—our deeds will testify to everyone how we lived our lives.
- In eternity, people will be able to look at us and know immediately that we lived a life of first love for Jesus, that our works were motivated by a true desire to bring honor, glory, and praise to Him.
- This is why Jesus warned us about staying awake and keeping our wedding garments unstained (Rev. 16:15). Otherwise, if we allow ourselves to grow complacent, apathetic, indifferent, and lukewarm, our works will be burned at the judgment seat of Christ and the “shame of [our] nakedness” will be revealed (Rev. 3:18).
- John urged us to “abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His com-
6. **Jesus was motivated by eternal rewards and He used eternal rewards to motivate us to righteousness.**

- Jesus was empowered to live a consecrated life and endure the suffering of the cross because He was motivated by eternal rewards.
- Jesus’ vision for His life and ministry was defined by the Messianic prophecies. For example, because Jesus knew that He was the Son of Man that Daniel wrote about, He was motivated to live a faithful, righteous life (Dan. 7:13-14; Luke 21:27, 22:69).
- Jesus endured the shame of the cross by looking at “the joy set before Him” (Heb. 12:2). Undoubtedly, it was the joy of eternal rewards that motivated Jesus to endure hostility, persecution, shame, and suffering.
- Just as eternal rewards motivated Jesus to live a faithful and righteous life, He used this same motivational strategy to inspire us to live a life of holiness and faithfulness.
- In Revelation 2-3, Jesus offered the churches eternal rewards to motivate them to righteousness and to empower them to overcome compromise and complacency.
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repeatedly used eternal rewards to motivate people to a life of meekness, purity, and righteousness (Matt. 5-7).

7. **There are different degrees of eternal rewards.**

- Speaking of eternal rewards, Jesus said “many who are first will be last; and the last, first” (Matt. 19:30).
- This shows us that there are degrees of eternal rewards. For all eternity, some will be first in authority, glory, honor, and intimacy while others will be last.
- In the kingdom of heaven, there are the “least” and the “great” (Matt. 5:19).
- Many believers will barely make it into heaven—they will “be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:15). Others will sit down with Jesus on His throne and rule the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21).
- Some believers will shine like the sun, others like the moon, and others like a faint star (1 Cor. 15:41-42).
- Some believers will go into “the wedding feast” while others will not be allowed to enter (Matt. 25:10-13).
- Some believers will hear the Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:21). Others will hear Him say, “You wicked, lazy slave”—“assign him a place with the hypocrites” (Matt. 25:26; 24:51).
- In heaven, there are “places of honor,” people who are “more distinguished,” and there is “the last place” (Luke 14:7-10). Based upon how we live on the earth, we can “move up higher” (Luke 14:10).
Jesus said that some will be “considered worthy to attain to that age [the Millennial Kingdom] and the resurrection from the dead” while others will not be counted worthy (Luke 20:34-36).

Paul said that there is “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14, KJV), suggesting that there are lesser callings for those who do not “press toward...the prize” (Phil. 3:14, KJV).

Eternal rewards can be broken down into the following three categories:

1. Eternal intimacy
2. Eternal authority
3. Eternal glory

Eternal Intimacy

1. The parable of the ten virgins reveals that some believers will have greater intimacy with the Lord than others.
   - In Session 9, we looked in detail at the parable of the ten virgins.
   - Because of the blood of Christ, we saw that every believer is a “pure virgin” who has been betrothed to Jesus as His Bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Rom. 5:1). That means all ten virgins are genuine believers.
   - The parable of the ten virgins could also be called the parable of the ten Christians.
   - Only the five wise virgins paid the price to purchase the oil in order to make themselves ready (Matt. 25:4, 9-10). The foolish virgins, on the other hand, lived an undisciplined life. They ran out of oil, their light went out, and they did not make themselves ready as a worthy Bride (Matt. 25:3, 8, 10).
   - Jesus clearly revealed the reward for the wise virgins when He said, “Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut” (Matt. 25:10).
   - Because the wise virgins paid the price to purchase oil and to make themselves ready, they were rewarded with eternal intimacy with the Bridegroom.

2. Jesus promised the overcomers at Pergamum eternal intimacy.
   - Jesus said, “To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna” (Rev. 2:17).
   - The hidden manna is deep revelation that comes out of intimacy with Jesus.
   - Jesus said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF
The manna that provided sustenance to Israel in the wilderness pointed to something far more satisfying and eternal. True manna is the living words that come from the mouth of God. It is hearing God’s voice as we draw close to Him.

Jesus said, “It is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world....I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst” (John 6:32-35).

Since Jesus is the bread of life, hidden manna is the eternal reward of deep intimacy with Him. It is continual fellowship with Jesus, whereby we feast on His living words for all eternity.

To those who overcome, Jesus offers an intimate relationship with Him that will satisfy our souls forever. Just as eating brings physical satisfaction, as hunger pains are silenced and cravings are met, Jesus as the hidden manna will satisfy our souls and enrich our resurrected bodies for all eternity.

In addition, the hidden manna probably refers to dining with Jesus at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 3:20, 19:7-9).

Jesus also told the believers at Pergamum, “To him who overcomes...I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it” (Rev. 2:17).

In the days of the Roman Empire, white stones were given as awards to honor those who offered valiant service to the community, in battle, or who were victorious in an athletic game. Those who received the white stones were given special privileges and were given admission to special events, including the games and feasts hosted by the Roman Empire.

The white stone, therefore, probably refers to admittance to the marriage supper of the Lamb where we will dine with Jesus in deep intimacy for all eternity.

The “new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it” reflects our unique relationship with Jesus. It will characterize who we are, how we lived our lives in the secret place with Jesus, and how we will function in eternity.

In biblical days, a name was more than a label that set us apart from others. A person’s name reflected their nature. A person was their name.

When God renames the overcomers, it will personify their transformation into the nature of Christ and it will reflect their new identity and eternal destiny.

But there is more to this name than its newness. The only ones who will know their new name are God and those who receive it. This new name, which will be hidden from everyone else, points to the intimate, private, and intensely personal nature of our eternal relationship with Jesus.

In summary, Jesus promises the overcomers the eternal reward of a deep, personal, and intimate relationship with Him.
3. Jesus promised to give the overcomers at Sardis wedding clothes.

- Though most of the church at Sardis was asleep, there were a few who had “not soiled their garments” (Rev. 3:4). Because they were overcomers, Jesus promised that “they [would] walk with Me in white, for they are worthy” (Rev. 3:4).
- Most likely, walking with Jesus in white refers to receiving wedding garments, marrying Jesus, and participating in the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- Revelation 19:7-8 states, “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”
- Those who make themselves ready as a worthy Bride for Jesus will be given wedding garments, which are made of fine linen, bright and clean.
- The parable of the wedding feast makes it clear that only those clothed in wedding garments will be allowed to participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Matt. 22:11-13).
- Jesus told the believers at Sardis, “He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments” (Rev. 3:5).
- Jesus exhorted the lukewarm Laodiceans “to buy from Me...white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed” (Rev. 3:18).
- In other words, since only those clothed in wedding garments will be allowed to participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb, Jesus was offering the overcomers the reward of eternal intimacy with Him.

4. Jesus promised to make the overcomers at Philadelphia a pillar in His temple.

- Jesus said, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore” (Rev. 3:12).
- A pillar bears the weight of a building and speaks of stability, firmness, beauty, permanence, and importance. To be a “pillar in the temple” is to have a position of honor and authority in God’s throne room.
- All believers are part of God’s spiritual temple (Eph. 2:21-22), but some will be pillars who hold a special position of authority, responsibility, and honor in the Millennium and for all eternity.
- Perhaps the most puzzling aspect of this promise is found in Revelation 21:22, when John wrote about the New Jerusalem. He said, “I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”
- Why would God promise to make us a pillar in His temple if there will not be a temple in the New Jerusalem? Because the Father and the Son will be the temple and to be a pillar in this temple means that we will have a special place in God’s heart for all eternity.
- The best way to understand this is to look at John 1:18. Writing about Jesus, John said, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begot-
ten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”

- Notice that Jesus is “is in the bosom of the Father.” The bosom is the front of the body between the arms (John 13:23). In other words, the bosom is the area of the heart.
- One definition of bosom from *Webster’s New World Dictionary* is “the breast regarded as the source of feelings or the seat of inmost thoughts.”
- John is telling us that Jesus dwelled deep in the heart of the Father in eternity past, where He felt God’s emotions and knew His inmost thoughts.
- To be a pillar in the temple, therefore, is to occupy a place deep inside the heart of the Father and the heart of the Son. From this position of intimacy, we will also feel God’s emotions and know His inmost thoughts for all eternity.
- Paul said, “Your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). Our calling is to be with Christ inside the heart of God.
- The promise to be a pillar in the temple is a reward of eternal intimacy. Forever we dwell deep inside of God’s heart and we will “not go out from it anymore” (Rev. 3:12).

5. **Jesus invited the believers at Laodicea to dine with Him.**

- Jesus told the Laodiceans, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20).
- Though this promise relates to having increased intimacy in this life, Jesus was undoubtedly looking ahead to the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- The Greek word for dine in this verse is *deipneo*, which is derived from *deipnon*. In Revelation 19:9, *deipnon* is used to describe the “marriage supper of the Lamb.”
- In biblical days, table fellowship was a common image for deep communion and the strong bonds of affection and companionship. Dining brought people together where they shared intimate conversations, inside information, and secrets. In biblical times, dining was one of the most enjoyable experiences of life.
- Even in our day, dining is the place where we let our down guard and really connect with people. When we share a meal with someone, we usually become real and communicate with them at a heart-to-heart level.
- When Jesus invites us to dine with Him, He is offering us the opportunity to experience deep communion, intimacy, oneness, and friendship with Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- The joy and delight of dining with Jesus throughout eternity cannot even be articulated. The pleasure of eternal intimacy with Him is beyond words.
- Jesus used the reward of eternal intimacy to motivate the Laodiceans to overcome their self-satisfaction, complacency, and compromise.
Eternal Authority

1. **Faithfulness in this life determines the degree of authority that we will have in the age to come.**

- From previous sessions, recall that we will have responsibilities and assignments in the Millennial Kingdom and for all eternity. Faithfulness in this life determines the types of assignments we receive and the level of responsibility and authority we are given.
- Notice these Scriptures that describe believers having authority in the age to come:

  And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:10, NKJV).

  They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years (Rev. 20:6).

- Although there will be believers who will reign with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom and for all eternity, our faithfulness in this life determines the degree of authority that we will be given. This is clearly revealed in the parable of the minas.
- Many believers are familiar with the parable of the minas. They know that we are called to be faithful stewards of the resources that God has entrusted to us.
- Most of the time, however, believers do not consider the context of this parable. For example, Jesus said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return" (Luke 19:12).
- Jesus is the nobleman and the distant country is heaven. Like we saw in Session 4, Jesus will "receive the kingdom" at His heavenly coronation and "then return" at His second coming (Dan. 7:13-14; Rev. 5).
- While Jesus is away, his servants are called to "do business" until He returns (Luke 19:13). We do business by being faithful stewards of the resources that God has entrusted to us. This includes the way we manage our time, money, assets, talents, gifts, and ministry calling.
- At the judgment seat of Christ, we will be accountable for the way we stewarded the resources that God gave us.
- As a result of being "faithful in a very little thing," some believers will be "in authority over ten cities" (Luke 19:17). Others will be given authority over five cities.
- For too long, the Church has tried to spiritualize these cities. However, the cities that Jesus is talking about are real cities, such as New York, Washington, D.C., London, and Rome.
- Jesus will give his faithful servants authority to rule over literal cities in the Millennial Kingdom.
- With such a prestigious, honorable, and royal calling, it is vital that we become faithful in all areas of our life. We need to be faithful to God during the dry and mundane seasons. We need to faithfully seek the Lord in His Word, in prayer, and in worship. We need to faithfully fulfill...
the ministry calling that God has given to us.

- In all areas of life, we need to be faithful in the small things—even when no one but God is watching.

2. **Jesus promised the overcomers great authority in the Millennial Kingdom and for all eternity.**

- To motivate His people to overcome compromise and complacency, Jesus offered them eternal authority in His kingdom. Notice these Scriptures to the overcomers:

  He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father (Rev. 2:26-27).

  He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne (Rev. 3:21).

- What amazing promises! Our eternal destiny is to sit down with Jesus on His throne and to rule the nations with Him forever. It just does not get any better than that.

- Consider the presidential election in the United States. Potential candidates spend millions of dollars campaigning. They put in twelve to fifteen hours a day months before the election. They weary themselves to become the leader of the free world.

- God has invited us to something far greater than being the president of the only super-power in the world. Jesus has invited us to sit down with Him on the throne and to rule the nations with a rod of iron in the Millennial Kingdom and for all eternity. We are destined for the throne.

- To qualify for this high calling, Jesus says that we must overcome. This reward of eternal authority is not for every believer. Like we saw in Session 10, these rewards are reserved for those who overcome losing their first love, trials and tribulations, compromise with the world, the works of Jezebel, spiritual slumber, apathy, and complacent self-satisfaction.

- Those granted authority will participate with Jesus in judging the nations in the Millennial Kingdom. Not only will the overcomers sit down on the throne with Jesus, but the Bible says that “judgment [will be] given to them” (Rev. 20:4).

- Paul said to the Corinthians, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?” (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

- The overcomers will assist Jesus when He judges the nations and evaluates their role in the Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46).
3. The meek will inherit the earth.

- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5, NKJV).
- Only the meek will be given authority to rule and reign in the Millennial Kingdom.
- Many people falsely assume that meekness is weakness. They think of meek people as spineless, spiritless pushovers who are a doormat to the world. This is not a scriptural view of meekness.
- The dictionary defines meekness as “too submissive; easily imposed on; spineless; spiritless.” This definition is certainly not the biblical meaning of meekness.
- The Greek word used for meek is praus, which means “mild, humble.”
- One of the best explanations of meekness is found in Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words.
- Summarizing this explanation, the biblical concept of meekness has a “fuller, deeper significance than in nonscriptural Greek writings.” Meekness is “an inwrought grace of the soul” that is “first and chiefly towards God.” It is an attitude in which “we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting.” The meek do not “fight against God and more or less struggle and contend with Him.” Meek people view “the insults and injuries” of evil men as “permitted and employed” by God “for the chastening and purifying of His elect.” The meekness of Christ and of the believer “is the fruit of power.” The Lord was meek—not because he could not help himself—but “because he had the infinite resources of God at His command.” Meekness is “the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest” because “it is not occupied with self at all.”
- In summary, meekness is complete surrender to the will and purpose of God. It is an attitude of humility and total reliance upon the Holy Spirit for everything.
- Only the people with this type of meekness will rule and reign with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.

Eternal Glory

1. Believers will have varying degrees of eternal glory.

- Like we saw in Session 10, the overcoming sons of God will “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43).
- As we saw in Session 6, when the resurrection of the dead and the rapture takes place, God will “transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory” (Phil. 3:21).
- Our resurrected body will be glorious, powerful, and spiritual (1 Cor. 15:43-44). Paul said, “Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we will also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. 15:49).
- When we see Jesus, the Bible says that we will “be like Him” and that we will “be revealed with Him in glory” because “we will see Him just as He is” (Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2).
- Though all of us are called to shine like the sun in our glorified bodies,
believers will have varying degrees of eternal glory based upon the way they lived on earth.

- Paul said, "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:41-42).
- This verse clearly shows us that believers will not have the same degree of glory in their resurrected bodies. For example, the Eta Carinae is a highly luminous double star that is 100 to 150 times the mass of the sun and four million times brighter. The Pistol Star radiates about as much energy in twenty seconds as the sun does in a year. This star is about 80 to 150 times the mass of the sun and 1.7 million times brighter.
- The point is that believers will have varying degrees of glory in their resurrected bodies just as stars differ from stars in brightness. The degree of glory that we will have is based upon the way we live on earth. The degree of glory in our resurrected bodies will be directly related to what we overcome in this life and the amount of Christ-likeness that has been formed within us.

2. Consider what Jesus and Paul taught about the resurrection of the dead.

- Jesus said, "Those who are considered worthy to attain to that age [the Millennial Kingdom] and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35-36).
- Jesus said that we must be “considered worthy” to attain to the Millennial Kingdom and the resurrection of the dead. Then He said that those who are considered worthy become "sons of God" because they are “sons of the resurrection.”
- Six years before his death, Paul wrote to the Philippians: “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. 3:10-16).
- Notice carefully that Paul said, “In order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Paul, six years before his death, wanted to make sure that he was qualified to participate in the resurrection of the dead.
- This great apostle to the Gentiles who had written much of the New Testament, started hundreds of churches, and suffered immensely for Christ said, “Not that I have already obtained it [the resurrection of the dead]....I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet [the resurrection of the dead]” (Phil. 3:12-13).
- Paul, at this point in his life, did not believe that he was prepared for the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Paul wanted to regroup and refocus his life on knowing Jesus, His power, and His sufferings.
In light of eternal rewards, Paul wrote, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Let us do likewise. It will be worth it.

Notes

2. Webster’s New World Dictionary & Thesaurus, s.v. "bosom."
3. Webster’s New World Dictionary & Thesaurus, s.v. "meek."
Review Questions

True or False

_____ 1. At the judgment seat of Christ, Jesus will evaluate unbelievers based upon their works.

_____ 2. Because we are saved by grace and not by works, eternity will be the same experience for all believers.

_____ 3. At the judgment seat of Christ, faithful believers will receive eternal authority.

_____ 4. There are different degrees of eternal rewards.

_____ 5. Some believers will have all of their works burned up at the judgment seat of Christ.

_____ 6. If we are motivated to righteousness by eternal rewards, then our motives are selfish.

_____ 7. Believers will receive different degrees of glory based upon how they lived their lives.

_____ 8. At the judgment seat of Christ, unfaithful believers will be sent to hell.

_____ 9. Jesus was motivated by eternal rewards.

Fill in the blanks

10. ___________ in this life determines the degree of ___________ that we will have in the age to come.

11. Only the ___________ will be given authority to _______ and _______ in the Millennial Kingdom.

12. Believers will have varying _________ of glory in their resurrected bodies just as stars differ from stars in ____________.

13. Jesus promised eternal ___________ to the ______________.

14. Some believers will shine like the _______, others like the _______, and others like a faint _______.
Match the statement on the left with the correct category of eternal rewards on the right (You can use an answer more than once).

15. Jesus will give his faithful servants authority to rule over literal cities in the Millennial Kingdom.

16. Though all of us are called to shine like the sun in our glorified bodies, believers will have varying degrees of eternal glory based upon the way they lived on earth.

17. Jesus promised to give the overcomers hidden manna and a new name written on a white stone.

18. Jesus promised to make the overcomers a pillar in the temple.

19. The parable of the ten virgins reveals that some believers will have greater intimacy with the Lord than others.

20. Jesus said that we must be considered worthy to experience the resurrection of the dead.

Possible Matches for 15-20

a. Eternal intimacy
b. Eternal authority
c. Eternal glory
Making Ourselves Ready

This session covers:

- The need to prepare for the end times and for eternity
- Eleven things that we can do to be ready

This session corresponds to:

- Session 12 of *Prophetic Vision for the End Times* CDs

Preparing for the End Times and for Eternity

1. It takes time to build an ark.

- Jesus said that His coming would be just like the days of Noah (Matt. 24:37-41).
- While the world is at ease—pursuing pleasure and living in rebellion—God’s judgments will break in suddenly without warning. Just as the “flood came and took them all away,” God’s judgments will destroy those who are not ready.
- Nevertheless, God will have a remnant in the earth who, like Noah, walk with God and live in holiness. Like Noah, this remnant will build an ark, so to speak, by preparing themselves for the end times.
- We don’t wait until the rain comes to start building. Noah began constructing the ark when it had never rained and it took about 120 years before it was needed. He must have appeared crazy to the people around him. Just imagine what his friends and relatives thought as he built a boat to prepare for what had never happened.
- It takes time to build an ark. We must begin preparing for the global judgments and the end-time pressures today. We must begin living for eternity and preparing for the end times right now. We don’t wait to prepare our hearts and homes for the end-time
crisis when the weather man forecasts rain. We begin during the drought—when it seems like rain is years away.

- It takes time to prepare for the end times. This is not about storing water, canned goods, and ammunition in our basement. It is about pursuing an intimate relationship with Jesus and preparing ourselves as a worthy Bride for Him.

2. **Jesus taught us to be ready for the end times and for eternity.**

- When speaking about the end times, Jesus frequently used phrases like "be ready," "be on the alert," "be dressed in readiness", "will He find faith on the earth," and be found "so doing when He comes" to exhort us to be prepared for the last days (Matt. 24:42-44, 25:10-13; Mark 13:35, 37; Luke 12:37-40, 21:36, Luke 18:8, Matt. 24:46).
- The New Testament speaks frequently about being ready for the end times and the return of the Lord. In each of these cases, the messages are directed toward believers—not unbelievers.
- From these Scriptures, it is clear that the most important end-time issue is not when the rapture will take place or whether the third trumpet judgment is a meteor or an asteroid. The real issue is whether or not we are ready for the end times, the Millennial Kingdom, and for all eternity.

**Eleven Things that Will Help Us Be Ready**

1. **Pursue intimacy with God.**

- Jesus says to us, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20).
- When we hear the Lord’s voice and open the door to Him, we will dine with Him in deep and intimate fellowship. Dining with Jesus involves sharing our heart with Him and listening to the deep things that are on His heart. Dining with Jesus is an intimate, face-to-face communing with the Son of God through the power of the Spirit.
- Dining with Jesus is about having a rich and satisfying two-way relationship with the Son of God. It is about spending time soaking in God’s presence and fellowshipping with the Holy Spirit in conversational intimacy.
- To have a lifestyle of intimacy with the Lord, we begin by making Jesus the first love of our lives and we make the first commandment our first priority. We spend more time worshiping the Lord, praying, listening to His heart, and studying and meditating upon the Scriptures.
- The greatest way that we can prepare for the end times and make ourselves ready for the Lord is to pursue an intimate relationship with Jesus.
2. Be faithful in small things.

- To be prepared for the end times and for eternity, we must be “faithful in a very little thing” (Luke 19:17).
- Because the servant in the parable of the minas was faithful in a very small thing, Jesus put him “in authority over ten cities” in the Millennial Kingdom.
- God wants us to be faithful in every dimension of our lives, including our time, money, marriage, family, ministry, church, and job.
- Preparing for the end times and for eternity is as practical as using your time wisely. Make every second count. Don’t waste time. The Bible says, “Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).
- Faithfulness in small things also applies to how we manage our money. God wants us to use our money in a way that frees up our finances for the kingdom and glorifies God in how we use it. Our money belongs to God and we are His stewards.
- The Bible says, “For who has despised the day of small things?” (Zech. 4:10, NKJV). So often, instead of being faithful in small things, we despise small things. Remember: It was the servant who only received one talent who buried it (Matt. 25:24-29). Perhaps this servant despised the small thing that God had given him.
- What small thing do you despise? Be faithful to the small things that God has given you and you will be preparing yourself for the end times and for eternity.
- If you are committed to a local church, carry out the tasks assigned to you faithfully. If you are called on to sweep, clean the bathrooms, vacuum, or greet people, do it with everything in your heart. Be faithful with your assignment in the local church even when no one but God is watching.
- Likewise, be faithful at work. If you are required to put in forty hours, don’t be slack and put in thirty-nine. Be faithful in the small things.
- Be faithful to pay your taxes. Be faithful to tithe. Be faithful to be at work and church on time. Don’t come to church halfway into the praise and worship time. If church starts at 10:00 A.M. get there early enough so that you are ready to worship and press in.
- Faithfulness in small things is so important that only “the called and chosen and faithful” will return with Jesus to defeat God’s enemies and establish the kingdom of God on the earth (Rev. 17:14).

3. Practice the disciplines of the faith.

- To be prepared for the end times and for eternity, we must live disciplined lives.
- Paul told the Corinthians,

  Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in
all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

- The prize that we are competing for is much more valuable than an Olympic gold medal or Super Bowl trophy. We are pressing in to receive the eternal reward of ruling and reigning with Christ as His worthy Bride. This is infinitely more valuable than receiving a “perishable wreath.”
- Paul said, “I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that...I myself will not be disqualified.” Paul knew that he would be disqualified from the high calling of God if he did not discipline his body.
- Likewise, if we want to be ready for the end times and for eternity, we must be disciplined. We must exercise self-control and restraint. We must say no to the flesh and say yes to the Spirit.
- To be prepared for the high calling of God, we must discipline ourselves to wake up earlier to seek the Lord in prayer and worship. We must discipline ourselves to fast and to hold our tongue when we want to gossip or judge.
- To be prepared for the end times and for eternity, we must practice the disciplines of the faith, such as prayer, worship, listening to God, fasting, reading the Bible, giving, and ministering to people in need.

4. Devote yourself to personal and corporate prayer.

- To be prepared for the end times and for eternity, we must devote ourselves to personal and corporate prayer.
- Speaking about the end times, Jesus said, "Be on guard, so...that day [the Day of the Lord] will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength” (Luke 21:34-36).
- Jesus specifically linked the end times with the call to devotional prayer. Because the Day of the Lord will affect everyone living on the earth, Jesus urged us to prepare for that time by devoting ourselves to prayer before the crisis hit. A well-established personal prayer life is the only thing that will get people through the traumas of the end times. And like we saw earlier, we don’t wait until the crisis hits to begin. We start developing a personal prayer life today.
- Jesus also said, "My house shall be called a House of Prayer for all the nations” (Mark 11:17). The Church of Jesus Christ is so much more than a place where we gather on Sundays to sing a few songs and hear an entertaining sermon. The Church, above all, is called to be a House of Prayer for all nations.
- For us to be prepared for the end times and for eternity, we must devote ourselves to corporate prayer. This is so important to the Lord. Even when prayer meetings are mundane and boring—and at times
they will be—we need to plow through, press in, and be faithful. We cannot expect to rule the nations with Jesus if we can’t pray for an hour on Wednesday.

- Faithfulness to corporate prayer is preparing us to rule the nations with Christ for all eternity.
- After Joel described the great and terrible Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1-11), he admonished the people to give themselves to corporate prayer and fasting (Joel 2:15-17).
- How can we expect to be ready for the end times and for eternity when we run to our comfortably furnished and nicely decorated homes while the house of the Lord lies desolate (Hag. 1:4)? Like Haggai said, we need to consider our ways (Hag. 1:5, 7). Corporate prayerlessness makes the house of God desolate—no matter how fancy our building is.

5. **Serve the vision of a local church.**

- To be prepared for the end times and for eternity, we must serve the vision of a local church.
- The Bible says,

> The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green, to declare that the LORD is upright (Ps. 92:12-15).

- We will only grow if we are planted. People who repeatedly go from one church to another will remain flaky and immature. We grow—not being transplanted from one house to another—but by being planted firmly and deeply in the house of God.
- Many believers are so sensitive that the smallest offense causes them to seek refuge at another church. Others are so addicted to something new and exciting that they run from meeting to meeting and conference to conference to hear what the hottest prophet of the month has to say. Believers with attitudes like this will not grow because they are not planted in the house of God.
- If we want to be prepared for the end times and for eternity, we must plant ourselves in the house of God and serve the vision of a local church—even when it is dry, boring, and mundane.
- Despite its weaknesses, failures, problems, and issues—and there are many—Jesus is committed to building His Church (Matt. 16:18). He loves the local church.
- We will only be prepared for the end times and for eternity by faithfully serving the vision of a local church. That means we serve the pastor and his vision without grumbling and complaining that the church should be doing something else.
- How we serve the pastor and the leaders of the church is a measuring rod of how we serve God. The way we submit to church leaders is the most tangible measurement of how we submit to God.
• Serving the vision of a local church means that we come to submit and serve. We are not coming to change the way things are done or to work our way up the leadership ladder. We are not serving the vision of a local church so that our personal ministry can thrive and gain influence. We lay all of that down to serve in the local house.
• What happens corporately is so much more important than what we do individually.
• Many people think that they can fulfill the call of God apart from the house of God. That is deception. It is impossible to fulfill the call of God and to be prepared for eternity if we can’t serve the vision of the local church where God has planted us.
• As the times get tougher—and they will—the only thing that will sustain us is the strength that we receive from the local church. There is so much power and strength in the house of God.


• Speaking about the end times, Jesus asked a sobering question that needs to be examined. He asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).
• The end times will be so trying and intense that many will depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1). Because of the pressure and persecution of the end times, many will lose their faith and fall away from God (2 Thess. 2:3).
• Jesus said that the end times would be so trying that men would be “fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world” (Luke 21:25-26).
• In light of this, growing in faith is a vital part of preparing for the end times. To be ready for the pressures of the end of the age, God will refine our faith through the trials of everyday life.
• Untested faith is not genuine faith (1 Peter 1:6-7). Our beliefs and doctrines and theology are just religious head knowledge until it has been baptized by fire. Real faith is what we have after our faith has been tested. Real faith is what we have after tribulations, adversities, and trials. Real faith hears the Word and bears fruit with perseverance. Real faith has been refined by fire.
• Jesus Christ is not only our Lord and Savior; He is also the “author and perfecter of [our] faith” (Heb. 12:2). This means that we will go through trials—even God-ordained trials. Jesus yearns to make our faith genuine, complete, and mature.
• Jesus is actively working to perfect our faith so that it is real faith—a fire-tested confidence that we can overcome any adversity or trial by the power of the Holy Spirit.
• To be prepared for the end times, we need to grow in faith.

7. Devote yourself to becoming a worthy Bride for Jesus and an overcoming son of God.

• In Session 9 and 10, we looked at the end-time call to become a worthy Bride for Jesus and an overcoming son of God.
• Becoming a worthy Bride for Jesus requires total surrender to the Holy Spirit. You don’t buy oil for your lamp and make yourself ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb as you get ready for work. This requires time, energy, focus, and dedication. It requires devotion to prayer, seeking the face of God, worship, and meditation upon the Scriptures.
• **Our calling should define our lifestyle rather than our lifestyle define our calling.**
• To become sons of God who receive our full eternal inheritance, we must overcome every entanglement and distraction.
• To become sons of God who shine in the glory of the sun and who rule the nations with a rod of iron, we must overcome losing our first love, trials and tribulations, compromise with the world, the works of Jezebel, spiritual slumber, apathy, and self-satisfaction.
• Becoming a worthy Bride for Jesus and an overcoming son of God requires surrender, focus, dedication, time, and energy. The reward is far worth the price we pay—but there is a price to pay. To transition into this high calling, we must get more oil for our lamps and overcome everything that would hinder us.

8. **Repent of lawlessness.**

• Perhaps the most sobering statement in the parable of the wheat and the tares is that God will do a great sifting in His Church.
• Jesus said that He will “send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness” (Matt. 13:41-43, NKJV).
• In the end times, many who call Jesus Lord will be gathered out of His kingdom because they “practice lawlessness.” These will have a lawless lifestyle characterized by pride, rebellion, independence, and self-centeredness.
• As the great end-time shakings intensify, the true nature of everyone will be made known. Both God and Satan will have sons that come to full maturity (Matt. 13:38). There will be no middle ground. There will be only two natures: The nature of the Lamb (Jesus) and the nature of the beast (the Antichrist).
• When wheat is fully mature, it bows down. Tares, on the other hand, stand up straight. This will certainly be the case in the great end-time harvest.
• God’s mature sons will bow low with humility and meekness. Satan’s mature sons will stand up straight with pride and independence.
• The nature of the Lamb is humble and meek; the nature of the beast is proud and self-serving. The nature of the Lamb is self-sacrificing and God-centered; the nature of the beast is self-preserving and self-centered.
• In the light of the great end-time shakings, now is the time to repent of all forms of lawlessness—including pride, rebellion, independence, stubbornness, and self-centeredness.
9. Seek humility and meekness.

- To prepare for the end times and for eternity, we must begin seeking humility and meekness.
- This is an hour to “seek humility” that we might be “hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger” (Zeph. 2:1-3).
- Isaiah said that God “will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty and against everyone who is lifted up” (Isa. 2:12).
- God’s end-time judgments will rain down from heaven against the proud, the rebellious, the lawless, and the self-centered. In that day, the "pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of men will be abased; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day” (Isa. 2:17).
- Humility is not self-abasement or a lack of confidence. Rather, humility is total reliance upon God for everything—knowing that He is smarter and stronger than we are. Humility bows low before God and relies on His grace for wisdom, direction, provision, healing, strength, and deliverance.
- Meekness and humility are twins. Like we talked about in Session 11, meekness does not resist, dispute, or fight against God’s dealings. Instead, meekness accepts the dealings of God, knowing that they are for our eternal good.
- Meekness is internal power and is the by-product of complete submission to the Holy Spirit. Meekness is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest because meekness is not occupied with self at all.
- Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5, NKJV).
- Humility and meekness will be our refuge in the Day of Judgment and the virtues that will qualify us for ruling the earth with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.


- To prepare for the end times and for eternity, we must develop a love of the truth.
- When the disciples asked about the end times, the first thing that Jesus said was "take heed that no one deceives you" (Matt. 24:4, NKJV). In the end times, deception will be rampant.
- The problem with deception is that we don’t know when we are deceived. That is what makes deception so deceptive—and frightening.
- Talking about the end times, Paul said,

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as
to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness (2 Thess. 2:7-12).

- From this passage, there are many important points.
- First, the Antichrist will come “with all the deception of wickedness.” In other words, he will be so crafty, smooth, eloquent, popular, and charismatic that it will be really hard for many to discern the truth from lies. He will deceive billions of people into worshiping Satan.
- Second, people will take the mark of the beast and worship Satan because “they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.” Only those who love the truth will escape the strong delusions that are coming upon the earth.
- Third, “God will send upon” those who don’t love the truth “a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false.” How scary! If we don’t love the truth, God—not the devil—will allow us to be deceived.
- The Bible says that the nations will be deceived by the harlot Babylon, which will be a one-world religious, economic, and political network empowered by Satan, and will be deceived by the false prophet, the Antichrist’s right hand man, into taking the mark of the beast and worshiping Satan (Rev. 18:23, 19:20).
- If we don’t love the truth with all of our heart, we could easily be swept away by this deluding influence that will deceive all nations.
- The deception in the end times will be so strong that many believers will fall away from the faith into spiritual apostasy (2 Thess. 2:3).
- To stand in the end times, we must develop a love for the truth. We must love the truth, search for the truth, stand for the truth, speak the truth, and hold fast to the truth without wavering.
- Even if the truth offends us, if it is true, we must choose to accept the truth and let the truth set us free.
- Ultimately, our love for the truth is an expression of our love for Jesus who is the Truth (John 14:6).

11. Press on towards the high calling of God.

- Finally, to be prepared for the end times and for eternity, we must press on towards the high calling of God.
- Paul said,

Not that I have already obtained it [the high calling of God] or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to
which we have attained (Phil. 3:12-16).

- As we end this session and this class, let’s have the same focus, drive, and determination of Paul. Let’s “press on” so that we may “lay hold of” the “goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” This “upward call of God” is what we have looked at in this class—becoming a worthy Bride for Jesus and overcoming sons of God.
- Like Paul, let’s forget “what lies behind” and reach “forward to what lies ahead” and “press on toward” the high calling of God.
- If any obstacles stand in your way, press through them. If demonic resistance is coming against you, press through it. If the failures of the past are weighing you down, let go of them, forget about them, and reach forward to the indescribable and incomparable treasure called the high calling of God.

To be prepared for the end times and for all eternity, let go of your past, embrace your future, and press through every obstacle that stands in your way. You will not regret it.
Review Questions

True or False

_____ 1. The best way to prepare for the end times is to store water, canned goods, and ammunition in our basement.

_____ 2. The greatest way that we can prepare for the end times and make ourselves ready for the Lord is to pursue an intimate relationship with Jesus.

_____ 3. Being faithful in small things will help us succeed in this life, but does not have any eternal significance.

_____ 4. Faithfulness to corporate prayer is preparing us to rule the nations with Christ for all eternity.

_____ 5. In the end times, God will send a deluding influence upon those who don’t love mercy.

_____ 6. God will have a day of vengeance upon the proud.

_____ 7. You can fulfill your destiny on your own. You don’t need the local church.

_____ 8. Practicing the disciplines of the faith is an important way to prepare for eternity.

_____ 9. A lawless lifestyle is characterized by pride, rebellion, independence, and self-centeredness.

Fill in the Blanks

10. ________ faith is not genuine faith.

11. A well-established _________ _________ life is the only thing that will get people through the traumas of the end times.

12. Serving the vision of a local church means that we come to _________ and _________.

13. God’s mature sons will bow low with _________ and _________. Satan’s mature sons will stand up straight with _________ and _____________.

14. ____________ and ____________ will be our refuge in the Day of Judgment and the virtues that will qualify us for ruling the earth with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.
15. The _____________ in the end times will be so strong that many believers will fall away from the faith into spiritual _____________.

Match the statement on the left to the way we make ourselves ready on the right.

_____ 16. In the end times, deception will be rampant.

_____ 17. God’s end-time judgments will rain down from heaven against the proud, the rebellious, the lawless, and the self-centered.

_____ 18. The prize that we are competing for is much more valuable than an Olympic gold medal or Super Bowl trophy.

_____ 19. Because of the pressure and persecution of the end times, many will lose their faith and fall away from God.

_____ 20. Preparing for the end times and for eternity is as practical as using your time wisely.

Possible Matches for 16-20
a. Practice the disciplines of the faith.
b. Be faithful in small things.
c. Devote yourself to personal and corporate prayer.
d. Seek humility and meekness.
e. Serve the vision of a local church.
f. Grow in faith.
g. Repent of lawlessness.
h. Become lovers of the truth.
### Answer Sheet

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| 10. half | 10. faithful; saints | 10. apostolic; Church |
| 11. everything; shaken; shaken | 11. Warrior; King | 11. spectator; mentality |
| 12. Noah | 12. reprobate | 12. irrelevant; unpractical |
| 15. seven; bowls | 15. redeemed | 15. event |
| 16. b | 16. h | 16. returned; Great; Tribulation |
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<td>19. c</td>
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Prophetic Vision for the End Times

Final Exam

The following questions are true or false. Place a “T” for true or an “F” for false in the space provided (2 points per question).

____ 1. Jesus is returning to take His Bride to heaven where they will spend eternity together.

____ 2. The purpose of the Millennial Kingdom is to bind Satan for a thousand years.

____ 3. In the end times, God will send a deluding influence upon those who don’t love mercy.

____ 4. The main reason why God’s judgments are being released is to prepare the way for His kingdom to come to earth in fullness.

____ 5. Being ready is the most important end-time issue.

____ 6. The gospel of the kingdom is the good news that Jesus died for our sins.

____ 7. The word “rapture” is found three times in the Bible.

____ 8. God promised to pour out His Spirit upon Israel before He supernaturally destroys an invading Islamic army.

____ 9. The church of Sardis and Laodicea were the only two churches not to be commended.

____ 10. The parable of the ten virgins is not related to the end times.

Fill in the Blanks (2 points per question)

11. ______________ in this life determines the degree of ____________ that we will have in the age to come.

12. Because God has given mankind ____________ over the earth, the events in the book of Revelation and other end-time Scriptures will only take place when the Church on earth ____________ with God’s plan in heaven.

13. We are called to ____________ the Lord’s return.

14. Some believers will shine like the ________, others like the ________, and others like a faint ________.
15. The __________ _________ are the second series of judgments that will be re-
leased in the end times.

16. Jesus will return in _______ and _______ ________.

17. The glorious end-time Church will be ________________, ________________, and
______________.

18. Only the ______________ will be _______ of God and will possess their full eternal
______________.

19. In the end times, Jesus will be revealed as a ______________, ________, and
______________.

20. Jesus promised to make the overcomers a ______________ in the temple.

21. Israel officially became a nation on ________ ____, __________.

22. The early Church believed that the rapture would take place when Jesus
________—after the ______________ ________________.

23. Those who have __________ among the people will give ________________ to the
many.

24. The __________ and __________ displayed in the book of Acts, the __________ and
__________ of Elijah, and the ______________ of Moses will be released into the earth
before the Lord returns.

25. The Day of the Lord will be a ______ _________ day for the rebellious who will
witness the most severe outpouring of God’s ___________ ever seen.
Multiple choice: Circle the correct answer (2 points each)

26. Which of the following best describes the Millennial Kingdom?
   a. The purpose of the millennial reign of Christ is to prepare the nations for the Father coming in the fullness of His glory to the earth.
   b. The kingdom of God is in the earth now.
   c. The kingdom of God is not in the earth fully.
   d. Jesus’ government will be fully established in all nations the moment He returns.
   e. God’s glory will be so intense that it will eliminate the natural processes of life.

27. Which of the following does not describe why the end-time Church will be glorious?
   a. The Church will love Jesus with passion.
   b. The Church will be in heaven.
   c. The Church will walk in purity.
   d. The Church will operate in great power.

28. Which of the following best describes the church at Ephesus?
   a. They were a very influential church.
   b. There was much pressure to worship the Roman emperor.
   c. The church worked hard and hated false doctrine.
   d. The church lost their first love.
   e. a, c, and d
   f. All of the above

29. Which of the following best describes the church at Thyatira?
   a. There was much pressure to compromise at the trade guild festivals.
   b. False doctrine was leading many astray.
   c. Jesus commended them for their faith, service, and love.
   d. Jesus offered them the reward of sitting on His throne.
   e. Jesus rebuked them for being asleep.
   f. a, b, and c
   g. a, b, c, and d

30. Which of the following does not describe the church at Smyrna?
   a. Jesus did not rebuke them.
   b. They were under great pressure to worship the Roman emperor.
   c. They were promised special privileges in Jesus’ Millennial government.
   d. They were promised a victors’ crown.

31. Which of the following is not true about the parable of the ten virgins?
   a. It could be called the parable of the ten Christians.
   b. It reveals the reward of eternal intimacy.
   c. It is specifically related to the end times.
d. The wise virgins were rewarded because they were faithful to their ministry assignment.

32. Which of the following is not an eternal reward that we discussed in this class?
   
a. Eternal life
b. Eternal intimacy
c. Eternal authority
d. Eternal glory

33. Which of the following best describes the prophetic timeframe known as Worldwide Peace and Safety?
   
a. Escalates when the Antichrist breaks his peace treaty with Israel and sets up the Abomination of Desolation in the Jerusalem Temple.
b. Includes the following signs: Increased deception, wars and rumors of wars, nations rising against nations, kingdoms rising against kingdoms, famines, and earthquakes.
c. The positive and negative events that will intensify in the final three-and-a-half years before Jesus returns.
d. The Antichrist will make a seven-year peace treaty with Israel and the Middle Eastern nations.

34. Which of the following best describes Jesus as a Warrior King?
   
a. Jesus will judge the nations based upon their treatment of Jews and Christians during the Tribulation.
b. Jesus will return in power and great glory.
c. Jesus will be covered in the blood of His enemies.
d. Jesus will make Jerusalem the greatest city on earth.

35. Which of the following is a true statement about the Millennial Kingdom?
   
a. The purpose of the Millennial Kingdom is to bind Satan for a thousand years.
b. God’s glory will be so intense that it will eliminate the natural processes of life.
c. Israel will be exalted above all the nations.
d. Jesus will instantly transform the nations when He returns.
Discuss in your own words (10 points each)

36. In your own words, describe when you believe the rapture will take place. Use Scriptures to support your answer. Describe why other views are not scriptural. Note: You don’t have to agree with the Post-Tribulation Rapture theory to get full credit for this question.

37. In your own words, describe why we need to make ourselves ready and how we do it.
38. State whether the following statement is true or false. Then, from what you have learned in this class, defend your position. Use Scripture to support your argument.

Because God is sovereign, He will fulfill the events in the book of Revelation in His own timing and way. Furthermore, there is nothing in the book of Revelation that says we have a role to play in activating end-time events.