

BASICS · Part 9 - The End

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Interest & Decline

1. The 70's and early 80's were a period of intense interest in what was popularly referred to as "Last Days prophecy"
2. Bible prophecy was all the rage and it seemed that for many, there was nothing more exciting than to hear about some new fulfillment of this or that latter day passage of scripture.
3. Hal Lindsey's, *The Late Great Planet Earth* was the biggest selling non-fiction book of the 1970's.
4. Despite the predictions of a handful of fanatics, Jesus did not come back in the late 80's.
5. And as a result of the worn out excitement looking for Christ to come, the early and middle years of the 90's were marked by a reluctance to talk about prophecy and the end times.
6. Some were actually embarrassed that the forecasts of imminent doom weren't realized.
7. Toward the end of the 90's, interest once again began to rise in the study of Bible prophecy.
8. A whole new generation of believers is now discovering it for the first time and the wild success of the *Left Behind* novels has fueled new impetus to "get up to speed" in what the Bible says about this important topic.
9. Those of us who never lost interest in the subject from those earlier days are encouraged and have been waiting for the Church to re-discover the vital doctrine of the Return of Jesus.

B. Today

1. Today, I will attempt to summarize: the basic flow of events the Bible foretells will precede, attend, and then follow the return of Christ to earth.
2. This is only a thumbnail sketch of a complex and engaging subject -
3. But I must begin with this...
 - a. when it comes to the subject of Bible prophecy and the Last Days, there are many different theories on how everything will pan out.
 - b. these differences have existed for generations, and intelligent, godly men and women have lined up on all sides.
 - c. it's the duty of Christian love and grace to respect each other even while vehemently disagreeing over doctrinal issues which are not essential to salvation.
 - d. there is a saying we would do well to live by:
In the Essentials - Unity

II. THE ESSENTIAL

A. *Jesus Is Coming Again*

1. Theologians call the study of Bible as prophecy it relates to the Last Days, Eschatology which means, the study of last things
2. And while there are many different schools of thought in regard to prophecy and how it will all come down in the last days,
3. There's one central doctrine upon which ALL CHRISTIANS are agreed – Jesus is Coming Again!
4. Being an orthodox, Bible-believing Christian, means believing that Jesus will Return to earth VISIBLY!
5. Let's take a look at just a few verses that speak of this...
 - a. in Matt. 24, Jesus is responding to the disciple's questions about His return. In v. 30 he

says . . .

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

- b. 2 chapters later, at His trial, Jesus said this to the high priest when He was asked if He was indeed the Messiah [Matt. 26:64] ...

Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

- c. in Acts 1, we have the story of Jesus' ascension into heaven.
 - 1) while the disciples stood there watching, Jesus began to rise up from the earth
 - 2) they stood there dumfounded, their mouths hanging open
 - 3) in fact, long after Jesus had entered the clouds and was no longer visible to them, they stood there gazing heavenward
 - 4) then two angels appeared and said...

. . . "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

- d. in Rev. 1:7 John penned these words...

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.

6. These and the many other prophecies in the Bible all speak of the Visible Return of Jesus Christ to Planet Earth.
 7. So Christians, since the first days of the Church right up to the present day have been unanimous in their belief in the Second Advent, or Coming of Christ

B. The Difference

1. It's the Second Coming that marks the Christian Faith as fundamentally different from most other world religions.
 - a. you see, most religions are little more than a moral philosophy and way of looking at the world and life
 - b. Christianity is different in that it's firmly rooted in past historical events and believes in future events
 - c. just as our faith is based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is realized and vindicated in His Second Coming
 - d. to be a Christian means believing in a consummation, a great summing up of all that's gone before.
 - e. Christians don't just follow some high moral code; it isn't just about looking to Jesus as example
 - f. Jesus is The Victorious King Who first wins his Kingdom at the Cross, then comes to take possession of it
2. Christians are those who in the end will be able to say to the rest of humanity - "See, I told you so!"

C. The Debate

1. This is something all orthodox Christians believe in
2. But may I say, that is about as far as the agreement goes
3. From here, it seems the followers of Jesus separate in their understanding of eschatology into several diverse camps
4. They all seem to center on what the Bible means when it talks about the Earthly reign of Christ
 - a. we all now He's coming again
 - b. but when, and what will happen just before and after His return is the subject of endless discussion and at times, heated debate
5. It's obvious that there's no way we could look at all of the various ideas this morning
6. But I do believe it's important to at least share an outline of what the leadership here at Calvary Chapel believes in regard to last days Bible prophecy.

D. Viewing Scripture

1. Before I launch into that outline, let me say this...
2. As I've studied the scriptures and investigated what the Bible says about the last days and what the various views say,
3. I've concluded that it boils down to how one interprets scripture
4. You can look at scripture as being primarily symbolic, or you can take it literally
5. Those who hold to the view of Last Days Prophecy that we're about to look at believe that the Bible ought to be taken as literally as possible

- a. clearly, when normal words are used in a normal setting, we ought to interpret literally
 - b. when we are reading about visions that someone had of beasts and trumpets and bowls,
 - c. it is clear that we need to understand these as symbolic, but symbolic of something real, something that will be played out in history
6. Most all Bible students who understand prophecy in the normal sense and interpret scripture literally agree with what we're about to look at.

III. THE GREAT HIATUS

A. *Daniel 9*

- 1. If you were with us this last Wednesday evening, then you will remember how the last verses of Daniel 9 lay out an overview of God's prophetic timetable.
- 2. In Daniel 9, the angel Gabriel told the prophet Daniel that 490 years have been set apart from human history for the unique purpose of God's attention focused on the people and nation of Israel.
 - a. if you weren't here and this subject is of interest to you, I strongly urge you to get a copy of the tape from last Wednesday
 - b. here's what Gabriel said...Dan. 9:24-27

24 "Seventy weeks

- c. the Hebrew word means "sevens" and in this context refers not to day-weeks, but ;years so 70-7's means ;490 years are determined For your people and for your holy city,
- d. take note of what these 490 years are for; they are for God's focused attention on the Jews and the city of Jerusalem. And here's what will take place in that 490 years

To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem

- e. there's the starting point of the 490 years

Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks

- f. or a total of 69-7's, 483 years

the street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

- g. the first 69-7's are divided into two sections because two different building programs will be set for Jerusalem
 - 1) the first, which lasted for 49 years was a period of restoration after the Babylonian destruction
 - 2) the second period, lasting 434 years would be the continual building up and expansion of the city
3. Gabriel said the 490 years would begin With the command to restore and build

Jerusalem

- a. in Nehemiah 2, we discover that that command was given by the Persian King Artaxerxes on March 14th, 445 BC
 - b. Gabriel then said that 483 years later, Messiah the Prince would arrive
 - c. guess what, 483 years later, TO THE VERY DAY, on April 6, 32 AD, Jesus rode into the City of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday in the Triumphal entry, as the people heralded Him as their Messiah and Prince
4. This occurred after just 69-7's; there is one 7 year period left to go, the 70th-7, before all of the things mentioned in v. 24 are done.
 5. Gabriel said that 6 things would be accomplished before the end of that 490 years, and as you look at the list, you realize they are a description of the Earthly reign of Christ.
 - a. from finishing the transgression all the way to sealing up vision and prophecy,
 - b. and anointing the Most Holy speak of the end of this age the beginning of the next in which Jesus rules

B. The Last 7

1. But notice what happens next...

26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;

- a. that's a picture of the Cross, on w. hich Jesus was crucified for the sins of the world
- b. then, following the cross we have this...

And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

- c. just 40 years after Jesus death and resurrection, the Romans came and leveled Jerusalem
 - d. over the next 60 years they ruled Israel with a brutal hand and eventually made a policy that banned Jews from the area
 - e. Israel became a desolation
2. But we still have one 7 year period left to go; we find that in v. 27 . . .

27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;

- a. just as the beginning of the entire 490 years was given in v. 25 as the command to restore Jerusalem -
- b. so the beginning of the last 7 years commences with a covenant, an agreement that is made with many
- c. again, get a copy of last Wednesday's study for some insights into what this covenant might be and who it is that's behind it and who is entering it

But in the middle of the week

- d. or 3 ½ years into the last 7 years

He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

3. So, here's what we have -
 - a. the last 7 years begins with some unique agreement that involves many
 - b. its' reasonable to conclude that this covenant has something to do with the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem because we read that half-way in to the last 7 years the last days ruler brings a halt to sacrifices and offerings
 - c. then he does something so abominable that it results in all hell breaking forth on earth - literally!
 - d. then, at the very end, the "consummation" as it's called here, Jesus returns and initiates all the stuff we read in v. 24.
4. The point for us to glean this morning is' that with Jesus' Triumphant entry into Jerusalem, God's prophetic stopwatch stopped with 7 years left to go.
5. There remains one more seven year period, the 70th – 7 for the Jews and the nation of Israel when God will re-direct His attention back to them in a special and focused way.

C. The Times of the Gentiles

1. With the death and resurrection of Christ, God turned the focus of His redemptive plan from the people and nation of Israel to the Church, which is comprised of any and all, both Jews and Gentiles, who come to faith in Christ.
2. The last 2000 years are a great hiatus, a stitch in time, if you will, in which God suspends the prophetic clock and opens wide the doors to His Kingdom.
3. As the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 9-11, God's attention is now primarily on the Gentiles, as they are the majority comprising the Church.
4. But the time will come, when the Gentiles that are going to be saved will reach their total.
5. In Romans 11:25 we read this . . .

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

6. When that number is reached, when the fullness of the Gentiles is achieved, God will shift His redemptive attention back to Israel, and the prophetic clock will resume its course.
7. Jesus speaks of this time shift in Luke 21:24 when he says . . .

Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

- a. you and I live in a time gap between the first 69 and the 70th 7 of Daniel 9
- b. this is the time of the Gentiles
- c. but it won't be long now till God returns His redemptive focus back on to the Jews and Jerusalem to fulfill the last 7 years of this age

IV. THE GREAT DEPARTURE

A. The Rapture

1. But wait, if God turns His redemptive focus back to the Jews and the nation of Israel, what becomes of the Church?
2. Didn't God promise to never leave or forsake us? Indeed He did! [Hebrews

13:5 Matthew 24:20]

3. Before God can turn His redemptive focus back to Israel, He must first remove His redeemed from earth.
 4. This is what's foretold in 1 Thessalonians 4. [13-18]
 - a. there will come a moment in history when all those who are born again will be instantly transformed from mortal to immortal. [1 Corinthians 15]
 - b. those who have died, whose bodies have been buried and their spirits departed to heaven, will be reunited body and spirit
 - c. those who are alive at this event, will never see death! They will be instantly changed and transported to heaven.
 5. Paul describes it this way . . . [1 Thess 4:13-18]
- 13 I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.**
- 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.**
- 15 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 by no means precede those who are asleep.**
- 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.**
- 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.**
- 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.**

B. What It Will Be Like

1. If you were an unbeliever living on the Earth at that time, you could be talking to a Christian one moment, and when you blinked your eyes, just that fast, they would no longer be standing in front of you.
2. You'd just see their clothing dropping to the floor and hear their watch and fillings form their teeth hitting the ground.
3. This event, which sounds like something straight out of a rather far-fetched science fiction movie, is called the Rapture of the Church. [From the Latin for to "carry away" rapturo]
4. And as bizarre as it sounds, it will take place one day.
5. Many of us believe it's the NEXT major event to take place in the prophetic scenario.

C. Proof The Rapture Is Not The Second Coming

1. Now, as we put together what Paul says in 1 Thess. 4 with Daniel 9, we realize that the Rapture cannot be at the same time as the Second Coming as some people say
2. Here's why we can say that -
 - a. didn't Gabriel say that the last 7 years begin with the confirming of the covenant with many?
 - b. since we know that the first 483 years were fulfilled down to the very day, isn't it reasonable to conclude that the last 7 years will be as well?
 - c. so as soon as the covenant, whatever it is, is signed, couldn't a person start

- counting off the days and know precisely when Jesus was coming again?
- d. the answer is YES!
 3. But wait - didn't Jesus say that no one knew the day or hour of His return?
 4. Indeed He did t
 5. Therefore, the only conclusion we can draw is that Jesus was not speaking of His Second Coming when He says non one knows the day or the hour.
 6. He was referring to His coming for the Church in the Rapture, which comes like a thief in the night.

V. THE GREAT TRIBULATION

A. *The 70th-7*

1. What follows the Rapture is a seven-year period of time commonly called the Tribulation.
2. It's the last 7 years, Daniel's 70th-7, and as Gabriel says, it's a time of great trouble for those left behind.
3. It ends with Jesus' Return and the inauguration of His Kingdom on earth
4. But before Messiah can come and set up His glorious kingdom, the rebellious kingdoms of man have to be moved out of the way.
 - a. God backs man into a corner and confronts him with the reality that there is a God and He is righteous,
 - b. while man is a rebel whose only hope is to repent and cast himself on the mercy of God.

B. *Birth Pangs*

1. In Matthew 24, Jesus said the troubles of the Tribulation are much like “birth pangs”
 - a. as we read through Revelation 6-16 we see that they increase in frequency and intensity as the Tribulation progresses.
 - b. they're intended by God to turn man back to Him, and for some it works
 - c. but the majority will only harden in their rebellion so God turns up the heat even more.
2. This is what makes the Tribulation different from any other period of history.
 - a. while every age has known trouble and calamity,
 - b. this period will see the entire earth reel under one blow after another.
 - c. it's a time of God's wrath poured out, and it will be brutal.
 - d. in fact, Jesus said that if it was not brought to a speedy end, all of mankind would be wiped out [Matt 24:22]

VI. THE GREAT DECEIVER

A. *Deception*

1. In Matthew 24, Jesus warned that the Tribulation would be marked by widespread deception
2. Many pretenders would come claiming to be the world's savior, but they are all false-christs.

3. The Apostle Paul elaborates on this in 2 Thessalonians 2 and tells us that there will come one man from among the crowd of false prophets who is the arch-deceiver.
4. In 2 Thess. 2:1-12 we read...
 - 1 **Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,**
 - 2 **not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.**
 - 3 **Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,**
 - 4 **who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**
 - 5 **Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?**
5. This character, popularly referred to as the antichrist, has become the source for a lot of conjecture in both the Christian and secular communities.
 - a. several movies have been made with him as the subject; The Omen, End of Days, The Devil's Advocate, and others
 - b. the popular series of novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins give an interesting picture of what his career may or may not be like.
6. Paul's words here fit perfectly with what we've already read in Daniel 9
 - a. Gabriel told the prophet that there was a prince, a ruler coming who would initiate the agreement that would mark the last 7 years
 - b. but in the very middle of that time, he would bring an end to the sacrifices that were being offered in the temple, and bring in something so abominable that it resulted in the land being laid waste & desolate
7. Here Paul tells us what it is that is so outrageous it calls forth God's fury
 - a. the antichrist, the consummate man of sin and son of destruction
 - b. will enter into the holiest place in the temple and set himself up as the object of worship
8. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus said of this moment -

"When you see the 'abomination of desolation, ' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), [then flee the city and head for the hills]

 - a. the Jews, who until that moment will have believed that the Antichrist was their Messiah, will realize then that he is an imposter and they will reject him
 - b. in fury at their rejection and refusal to worship him, he will embark on a campaign of forced loyalty and submission that brutalizes them
 - c. this is why Jesus tells the Jews living in the land at that time to flee from the vicinity
9. Paul goes on to write . . .
 - 6 **And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.**
 - 7 **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.**

- a. even in Paul's day, he could see the spirit of rebellion at work in humanity
 - b. Paul knew that there was only one thing that held full-scale war against God at bay –
 - c. the presence of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of believers
 - d. remember what Jesus said to His followers?
 - 1) that we are salt and light this world
 - 2) as long as we are here, the Holy Spirit is present to hinder the decay of sin and to shine the light of love and truth into a dark world
 - e. but what happens when the Church is raptured?
 - f. while the Holy Spirit will still be present in the world, He won't be present in His capacity to restrain because the salt and light are gone
 - g. the result - wholesale rebellion and corruption - realized most perfectly in the antichrist and those who will gladly follow his diabolical plan
- 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.**
- 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,**
- 10 And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**
- 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,**
- 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

B. The Lie

1. With the removal of the Church, God let's humanity have it's way without restraint
2. The Antichrist rises to power and the world buys his promises of a glorious new future
3. But 3½ years after rising to power, he will bring forth that part of his agenda that he's kept hidden - in order for the Earth to know all he's offering in the way of peace and prosperity, it must honor him as God
4. He will then even perform signs and wonders that make it appear he is indeed a god.
5. And most people will swallow it - they will believe the lie and worship him as god.
6. This is when God then opens the windows of heaven and let's mankind experience the full result of rejecting Him
7. The Last Half of the final 7 years is called the *Great Tribulation*.

VII. THE GREAT WAR & RETURN

A. The War

1. Let me just summarize various passages now as we wrap it up.
2. The specific verses I'm referring to are found in your notes.
3. As the last days of the Tribulation period wind down, the world will be

polarized into three power centers; a. the Antichrist's realm which is centered in Europe, as we see in Daniel's vision b. the rulers of the east (which would be China) c. and the rulers of the south (which we take to be Africa).

4. It seems that the North and West have been taken out of play by the events of Ezekiel 38 & 39 which occur before the Tribulation period
5. The rulers of the East and South join forces to oppose the sweeping demands of the antichrist
6. They all send their armies to that place which has been the center of the world and the meeting place of three continents- Israel.
7. There in the Jezreel Valley they will enter into a contest to see who will win and assert domination over the rest of the earth. [Revelation 16:12-16; Armageddon comes from har-meggido, the mount of Meggido, and refers to the tell upon which sits the ancient city of Meggido, the fortress city which guarded the ancient trade route of the Via Maris as it left the coastal valleys and entered the expansive Jezreel Valley.]
8. This battle, called :Armageddon, is the bloodiest in the history of the world and will be in full swing when Jesus returns to earth.

B. The Return

1. When Christ comes for the Church in the Rapture, He doesn't really come to the earth.
2. He comes in the skies and takes Christians up to be with Him.
3. But when He comes at the end of the Tribulation, He comes to the earth, and everyone will see Him. [Zechariah 14:1-11 Revelation 19:11-16.]
4. He puts an abrupt end to the battle of Armageddon and immediately judges the kings of the world and the antichrist.
5. Then the world will enter a short period of time where the nations come before Jesus for His review and judgment. [Daniel 12:11-12 Matthew 25:31-46]
6. Those deemed worthy will be allowed to enter the Messiah' s Kingdom while those who have proven themselves unworthy will experience immediate judgment? [Matthew 25:31-46]

VIII. THE GREAT KINGDOM

A. Restoration

1. Then begins a thousand years of paradise on earth that is known as the Millennium.
2. Jesus will rule from the City of Jerusalem and His rule will be perfect!
3. Justice will be instant and complete.
4. The world will be restored to the place it was before the Fall. [The Fall refers to the sin of Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden which plunged the human race under the curse of bondage to decay and ultimately death.]
5. Think of it - all of the things that make trouble and bring sorrow, will be wiped away.
 - a. sickness, disease, famine and crime will be a thing of the past.
 - b. people will still have free will, but the rule of Christ will be so swirl and perfect, evil will be greatly restrained.
 - c. as well, the devil will be bound so that his influence cannot stir up

- wickedness, [Revelation 20:1-2]
- d. there will be those who will attempt to sin, but their judgment will be swirl and public. [Psalm 2]

B. New People

1. During this thousand years, many new people will be born.
2. The earth will be repopulated with billions,
3. And while the whole world has seen what it's like to live in a perfect environment for a 1000 years, their hearts will still be in opposition to God.
4. So God will end the 1000 years with an opportunity for these people to reveal what's really in their hearts.
 - a. the devil, who has been bound, will be released.
 - b. he will raise a new rebellion against God and will incite his followers to march with a vast army on the capital of Jerusalem.
 - c. but the rebellion will be short lived.
 - d. God will put an end to it before it gets anywhere
 - e. it was all just an opportunity for all of humanity to see that there is nothing wrong with God - the fault and problem lies with rebel man. [Revelation 20:7-9]

IX. THE END IS A BEGINNING

1. Finally, the current heavens and earth, the physical creation as we know it, will dissolve and a whole new reality will emerge. [Revelation 21 2 Peter 3:11-13]
2. A great throne will be set up and all of mankind will be brought before it for judgment . [Revelation 20:11-15]
3. Anyone whose name is not found in the Lamb's Book of Life will be sent to an eternity in the Lake of Fire. [The Lake of Fire is what most people think of when they think of hell. It is the place of final and eternal torment for those who have rejected Christ.]
4. While the saved will live forever in a New Heaven and Earth - a whole new reality utterly free of the presence of evil and sin
5. What the citizens of heaven will be doing after this doesn't fall within the scope of this book.
6. A sequel will be written - a whole new glorious story!
7. All we know is that we will be with our God in eternal glory - and that is enough!