

# Introduction

I started studying end-time prophecy in the mid-1990s. I had a voracious hunger to know about the end times. I dove deep into eschatology—a fancy word derived from the Greek word *eschatos*, which means *last* and *logy*, which means *the study of*.

I devoured commentary after commentary on the books of Daniel, Isaiah, and Revelation. I searched incessantly for the identity of the antichrist, the harlot Babylon of Revelation 17-18, what nations attack Israel in Ezekiel 38-39, the meaning and timing of Daniel's Seventy Week Prophecy, and what the Millennial Kingdom will be like. I studied the rapture and when it would take place.

What I realized, however, was not everyone shared my enthusiasm and zeal to know how end-time events would unfold. As I began teaching the end times, I clearly saw three different groups. First, there is a small minority who shares my passion for the end times.

Second, there is a large group who embraces "an ignorance is bliss" approach to the end times. They are happy not knowing how this age will end. Either indifferent or fearful of this topic, they don't resist the teaching. They just don't pay attention. They zone out.

Third, there is a growing number within the church who flat out resist anything to do with the end times. These are the mockers and scoffers Peter warned about (2 Pet. 3:3). They loathe talk of the rapture. They scoff at a literal antichrist who will be worshiped. Burned by extreme end-time teachings in the past, they have literally shifted to the opposite end of the spectrum. They now believe most of the prophetic Scriptures were fulfilled in 70 A.D., when Rome destroyed the Jewish temple and conquered Jerusalem. They focus exclusively on revival and transforming our cities and nations for Christ.

## 2020 Changed Everything

What I just described were the attitudes before 2020. But when the coronavirus pandemic spread throughout the world, shutting down businesses, sports, entertainment, dining, and schools, rattling entire economies, curiosity in the end times soared. Many began asking *are we living in the end times? What is going to happen next? Is Jesus returning soon?* People now want answers to their questions about the end times.

The group passionate about the end times now has an eager audience ready to listen. The indifferent or fearful group has become all ears. Questions are soaring. *Tell us again about the second coming. When is the rapture going to take place? That New World Order thing you talked about. Can you explain that to me again?* The shaking of 2020 has stirred a renewed interest in eschatology.

Unfortunately, the cynical group continues to mock eschatology. They are telling everyone to relax because most of the prophetic Scriptures have already been fulfilled. They say . . . *Don't worry. This is just a temporary setback leading to a world-wide awakening. Things are not getting worse. Stop being so negative. If you study the statistics, things are actually getting better. Relax. A great worldwide revival is coming that will transform the nations, leading to the second coming of Christ.*

In short, the first group believes they have all the answers. The second group wants to know these answers. While the third group mocks the answers as *Left Behind* fiction.

If you are in the first group and think you have all the answers, let's humble ourselves and resist the pride that can easily creep in from knowledge. There's a lot we all have to learn. The closer we get to the Lord's return, the more clearly we will see. Let's remain flexible, teachable, and humble. At the end of the day, *it's more important to be ready than to be right.* It would grieve me if I had my end-time doctrines perfectly accurate but my heart and soul were not ready to be with Christ for all eternity. What good is it if I solved all the mysteries of the end times but didn't know Jesus intimately and wasn't internally prepared for Him, conformed fully into His image and likeness?

If you are in the second group, indifferent about eschatology, viewing it as impractical and irrelevant to your daily life, I want to encourage you to learn about the end times. If the end times strike fear in your heart, now is the time to confront and overcome this fear by facing the truth head on. If you are in this second group, consider two exhortations in Scripture to study the end times.

First, Matthew, when recording Jesus' end-time teachings in Matthew 24, gave an apostolic command for us to understand the prophetic writings of Daniel (Matt. 24:15). Second, John, when writing the book of Revelation, promised mind-blowing blessings if we would simply read the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:3). Let these two exhortations inspire you to become a student of end-time prophecy.

If you are in the third group, I doubt you are even reading this. But in the unlikely event you are, ask yourself these honest questions: Have I grown disillusioned about the end times because of extreme, irresponsible responses to end-time teachings? Have I become cynical because an end-time fanatic made a wacky prediction about Jesus' second coming that never came to pass? Have I allowed my negative experiences to shape my eschatology rather than God's Word? If so, I hope this class will wash away the disillusionment and confusion, giving you clarity about what the Scriptures teach concerning the end of the age.

When it comes to eschatology, there is tremendous confusion. That is why my goal in writing this class was to make the end times as clear and simple as possible. My objective was to reduce the complexity and instill within you an unclouded vision of how God's ultimate intention will be accomplished at the end of the age.

## Why We Should Study the End Times

Hopefully I have persuaded you to study the end times. Paul exhorted us to "study to" show ourselves "approved unto God . . . rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). It would be tragic to stand before the Lord, having lived in the end times, but lacking understanding and the preparation required to overcome. All because we neglected the vast number of Scriptures in the Old and New Testament describing the end of the age. Please don't be that person.

If you still need more convincing to study the end times, here are seven reasons why eschatology is important.

### 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. The prophet Hosea said we are destroyed by a lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). Many in the church will suffer needlessly because they lack knowledge of what the Scriptures plainly teach about the end of the age.

In the times in which we live, understanding the end times is no longer optional. It is essential. Because eschatology was so important to Paul, he devoted much of 1-2 Thessalonians detailing Jesus' return. Keep in mind these were new believers. Jesus also instructed us to read and understand the book of Daniel (Matt. 24:15). Why? So we would be ready.

Jesus wants us to understand the end times so we will know what will take place and be spiritually, mentally, and physically prepared for it. If we don't understand the end times, this ignorance could lead to our downfall. It could lead to our falling away. It could lead to a denial of Jesus Christ to avoid persecution. It really is that serious and important.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, the religious leaders of his day, because they could not "discern the signs of the times" (Matt. 16:3). I have a hunch He might rebuke a number of respected religious leaders in our day, too. I don't want to be like the Pharisees, who were blinded to the pivotal moment of history in which they lived. Rather, I want to be like the sons of Issachar—"men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do" (1 Chron. 12:32).

Let's be people who understand the days in which we live so we can take wise and godly action.

### 2. Understanding the end times motivates us to seek the Lord with all of our hearts and live completely for Him.

Proverbs 29:18 states, "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." When we don't have a vision of the prophetic future, especially what the Scriptures teach about the end of the age, 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 it motivated wholehearted living now.

### **3. Understanding the end times inspires us to repent and overcome.**

In the book of Revelation, before we are told what will happen at the end of the age, Jesus first tried to wake up His sleeping church. He urged them—and us—to get our hearts 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: Understanding the end times motivates us to overcome whatever is entangling us. Insight into the end of the age inspires us to surrender our lives to Christ and learn to live by His life. 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.

### **4. Understanding the end times guards our hearts from offense at God.**

Describing the end times, Jesus said “many will be offended” (Matt. 24:10). Notice He did not say a few or some or only a remnant would be offended. He explicitly said *many*, which could imply millions of people. Jesus said *many* would be offended in the end times.

Why will so many be offended? Because God will release judgments, Satan will unleash his wrath, man’s sin will peak, 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. *Why would a God of love allow so much suffering? If God was good why would allow these wars, plagues, and natural disasters?*

If we don’t have insight into *why* God is allowing so much suffering, then we can easily become bitter and our love can grow cold. Especially if our lives are disrupted by God’s end-time shakings.

It’s important to study the end times now, while there is still time, so we can work through the theological tension of God’s goodness and His justice, of His kindness and severity, of His love and His judgments.

We need to understand the end times so we can rightly interpret the coming crisis instead of being offended at God.

### **5. Understanding the end times keeps us from deception.**

Jesus 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” (Matt. 24:4-5). Deception was the first thing Jesus mentioned about the end times.

Many have interpreted this verse to mean *watch out for imposters of Jesus Christ*. Really? Who would honestly believe someone who claimed they were Jesus Christ?

This is obviously *not* what Jesus was saying. Instead, Jesus warned about Christian preachers, teachers, pastors, prophets, and apostles—those who believe in Christ and preach the Word of God—subtly interjecting false teaching, which would lead believers astray.

Paul described a great falling away from the faith before the Lord returns (2 Thess. 2:3). Multitudes of believers will depart from the faith handed down to us by the apostles because “they did not receive the love of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:10). As a result, the “deception of wickedness” will blind them to the truth (2 Thess. 2:10).

One blinding deception is false teaching related to the end times, such as Preterism, which claims most prophecies were fulfilled in 70 A.D. Another rising eschatological error is Post-Millennialism, which purports Christianity will conquer the nations before Christ returns. These false teachings have been strategically crafted by the evil one to setup a great falling way. That’s why it’s imperative for us to know the truth about the end times.

### **6. Understanding the end times gives us faith and confidence.**

Speaking about the end times, Jesus asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). In essence, Jesus also warned of a great end-time apostasy. Because of the intense pressures of the end times, many believers will lose their faith. Embracing man-centered, demon-inspired

doctrines, many believers will fornicate with the antichrist's harlot religion (Rev. 17-18). This painful and sober warning, straight from the lips of Christ, is a stinging wake-up call.

How will this end-time apostasy unfold? One way is through false doctrines about the end times. Many will become disillusioned because their favorite prophet, apostle, or teacher assured them *we're not living in the end times; Jesus isn't coming soon; a great revival is coming that will transform cities and nations before Christ returns.*

Don't misinterpret what I'm saying. I absolutely believe the Lord will release an unprecedented outpouring of the Spirit, a great awakening, and a revival before the Lord returns. I just don't believe it will transform cities and nations. Instead, it will transform the heart of the true bride of Christ, preparing her for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The Lord will soon release a *bridal revival*, which will awaken the betrothed bride out of slumber, apathy, and lukewarmness, instilling within her a holy passion for Christ. This will purify her of all defilement, idolatry, and self-love, transforming her into the image and likeness of the Lamb, her beloved Bridegroom King.

If you believe a future revival will take away evil in the nations, remove wickedness, transform cities and nations, and Christianize the world, you have already bought into the deception. I will explain more about this in another session.

Back to my main point. The faith of many will be wavering at the end of the age. I'm convinced one reason is because God's people don't know what the Scriptures teach about the end times. Lacking this vital knowledge, they will become disillusioned when the earth is shaken to its foundations by God's judgments and Satan's rage.

Conversely, speaking from personal experience, nothing has caused my faith to soar like seeing the pieces of the prophetic puzzle fit together perfectly. It shows God is truly sovereign, in control, and the author of Scripture. It is humanly impossible for authors living in drastically different time periods, cultures, and nations, spanning a roughly 1,500-year-time period, to co-author a book that fits together perfectly. Only God could perform this miracle. Only God could masterfully weave together promise after promise, prophecy after prophecy, into a marvelous, beautiful tapestry, a work of art depicting in precise detail how His ultimate intention will be accomplished at the end of the age.

You see, the prophetic Scriptures are like a 10,000-piece-jigsaw puzzle. There are border pieces and interior pieces. You can't force a piece to fit. Each piece of the puzzle, scattered in the prophetic writings of Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the book of Revelation, fit together perfectly. As I have mined for gold and gathered precious pearls from over two decades of diligent study, I am stunned to see how perfectly the pieces of God's end-time puzzle fit together. This alone has given me confidence and faith in God's sovereign plan and how He masterfully executes this in the nations.

Studying the end times gives us unshakeable confidence and faith in God's wisdom, power, and providence.

## **7. Understanding the end times equips us to be a prophetic voice and intercessor.**

Before explaining this point, let me state I am Charismatic in my beliefs and have over 25 years of experience ministering in the gifts of the Spirit. This is why I care so much about the growing deception I see in the Prophetic Movement.

When I hear some of the words coming from the modern-day Prophetic Movement, I have to wonder if they even read their Bibles. Many of the so-called prophetic words contradict the clear teaching of the end times in Scripture. Sadly, it appears a deceiving spirit has infiltrated the modern-day Prophetic Movement.

Personally, I don't give much credence to so-called prophets and apostles who are misguided about eschatology, especially when it comes to what God is saying at a national or international level. When it comes to personal prophecy, end-time beliefs don't matter as much. But our view of the end of the age matters greatly when we speak prophetic words related to nations, politics, revival, and years into the future.

Daniel is the perfect example of a prophetic voice and intercessor. In Daniel 9, we see Daniel studying the prophecies of Jeremiah. Daniel wanted to know what the Lord had already said because he knew the Lord would not contradict Himself with new revelation. Please take note, all you so-called prophets, who are presently contradicting the Scriptures with your confusing prophetic words.

Anyway . . . after studying Jeremiah's prophecy about 70 years of captivity in Babylon, Daniel received what most scholars refer to as the backbone of all end-time prophecy. Known today as Daniel's Seventy Week Prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27). Not only did Jeremiah's prophecy inspire Daniel's prophetic revelation; it also fueled his intercession.

Here's my point. We can't be an accurate prophetic voice or an effective intercessor apart from diligently studying what the Old and New Testament prophets have already said. We must immerse ourselves in what Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, Paul, and John wrote about the end times before we can be a reliable, accurate, truthful messenger of the Lord. We must know God's plan for the end of the age intimately if we are to pray in alignment with God's will.

Eschatology is vital to every messenger and intercessor. A distorted view of the end times injects error into the messages we deliver in God's name and will lead to soulish prayers. Grounding ourselves in end-time teaching will prevent us from being a false prophet and flaky intercessor. This is certainly needed in this hour!

## How This Class Is Organized

As previously stated, my goal in writing this class was to take a somewhat complicated subject and make it easy to understand. To accomplish this, I have broken this class into four parts. These four parts are like its own short course within the overall course of *Understanding the End Times*. Though each part compliments the other, these four parts could also stand alone.

When reading a book or taking a course, I always enjoy the feeling of completion, whether completing a chapter, session, book, or course. Since *Understanding the End Times* is a long course, viewing these four parts as their own mini-course will give you a sense of completion, enabling you to finish the entire course with joy rather than wanting to shift to another topic.

That said, here's a short description of the four parts of this class.

### *Part 1 – Scoffers and Doctrines of Demons*

Because eschatological errors are now widespread, it's vital to first breakdown the false before we can establish the true (Jer. 23:29). At times, this requires the hammer of God's Word, which breaks demonic doctrines into a thousand pieces. God's Word, like a hammer, demolishes and shatters lies, false assumptions, stubborn presumptions, and soulish mixture (Jer. 23:29).

At other times, doctrines of demons are much more crafty and subtle, mingling leaven into truth. Applying a hammer in this situation would damage the truth and harm those who have benefited from a teaching, even if tainted by some error. This type of correction doesn't require a hammer but a scalpel. In this case, a skilled surgeon is required to delicately remove the cancer of false doctrines while not damaging the good. Rather than wielding a hammer carelessly, demolishing everything in its path, careful, thoughtful, gentle, and precise correction is needed.

In Part 1, I will apply both the hammer and the scalpel to wide-spread eschatological doctrines of demons, which have been promulgated within the church. Part 1 will lay the groundwork for loving the truth and overcoming the scoffing and mocking stemming from eschatological errors. I will also debunk Preterism and the Seven-Mountain Mandate, which are becoming increasingly popular in the Charismatic Church.

### *Part 2 – Israel, Islam, and the Revived Roman Empire*

Simply put, you can't properly understand end-time prophecy if you remove Israel from the equation. Numerous end-time prophecies are Jerusalem and Israel centric. If you embrace Replacement Theology and substitute the church in place of Israel, your end-time perspective will be warped and you will be misled. Israel and Jerusalem are vital to God's end-time agenda.

As you will see in Part 2, Daniel's Seventy Week Prophecy is the backbone of all end-time prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27). This is clear when you read the book of Revelation (Rev. 11:3; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5). Therefore, without a proper understanding of the book of Daniel, our interpretation of end-time prophecy will be askew. The book of Daniel reveals Jerusalem's central role in history and at the end of the age; the four empires who played significant roles in Israel's history; and it gives insight into the final empire, who will attack Israel and persecute Jews and Christians before Jesus returns.

In addition, we will examine Ezekiel 38-39, where the Lord Himself instigates the greatest jihad in history. A coalition of Islamic nations will invade Israel and God will supernaturally defeat them before the watching eyes of the world. This miraculous deliverance will release the greatest outpouring of the Spirit in history, both in Israel and throughout the nations.

### *Part 3 – God's Ultimate Intention Fulfilled*

If Daniel's Seventy Week Prophecy is the backbone of end-time prophecy, God's eternal purpose is its heartbeat. Everything the Lord will do at the end of the age is geared toward accomplishing His ultimate intention.

In short, God's eternal purpose is to have an inheritance in His people. Specifically, the Father will have a family of Christ-like sons who are conformed into the image of His Son. The Son will have an equally-yoked bride who has made herself ready. And the Spirit will have a spiritual house, body, and temple He possesses in fullness.

God's eternal purpose is greater than the unfolding of biblical prophecy and the restoration of Israel. Though these are important, God's ultimate intention eclipses both. We can't allow our hearts to be distracted from God's ultimate goal as end-time prophecy unfolds and Israel is restored.

In Part 3, we will look in detail at Revelation 12, Revelation 14:1-5, and Revelation 19:7. These three passages detail how the bride of Christ will be made ready in phases. A first-fruits remnant will make themselves ready before the majority. This first-fruits harvest will be followed by the final and ultimate ingathering, taking place during the last 3.5 years of the age. Just prior to the Lord's glorious return, the bride will finally be made ready.

In Part 3, we will also take a fresh look at the rapture and challenge some faulty beliefs about this controversial but vital topic.

#### *Part 4 – Increasing Birth Pains & the Day of the Lord*

The days leading to Jesus' return are like a woman about to give birth. There will be birth pains followed by a reprieve. As this process is repeated, the birth pains intensify while the reprieves shorten, until finally the baby is born. We are undoubtedly living in the time when the birth pains are intensifying. The coronavirus pandemic is certainly evidence of this.

In Part 4, we will look at some specific signs indicating Jesus' return is near. These are false teachers deceiving the church; wars and rumors of wars; extreme weather, famines, and earthquakes; tsunamis; a surge of lawlessness, riots, and anarchy; racial tensions escalating; the love of most growing cold; the gospel of the kingdom preached in all nations; false prophets deceiving God's people; the nations living at ease during the greatest time of prosperity in history; heterosexual and homosexual promiscuity increasing; unusual diseases and plagues, such as the coronavirus; a form of godliness without power; an inability to endure sound doctrine; an influx of popular but false teachers who compromise the truth and tickle the ears of their listeners; and an increase in travel and knowledge.

Jesus also compared His return to the days of Noah. This was a 120-year period leading to God's worldwide judgment and His deliverance of Noah and his family. As you will see in Part 4, we live in the days of Noah. The nations are eating, drinking, marrying, building, and planting—oblivious to what is just over the horizon. God is about to judge the nations. The Day of the Lord is fast approaching and most are clueless.

Even more troubling, God's judgments are rarely mentioned by church leaders. Many are flat out embarrassed that a God of love would judge people whom He created. In Part 4, we look at the topic of God's judgments so we can work through the tension between God's kindness and His severity. Working through this now will help us be a voice of comfort and reason to those tempted to take offense at God when He shakes the earth.

Finally, we conclude Part 4 with the gloriously good news of God's kingdom coming to the earth in fullness. Known by scholars as the Millennial Kingdom, this is the 1000-year reign of Jesus and His bride on the earth. During this time period, Jerusalem will become the praise of the earth and the glory of Jesus will cover the nations as the waters cover the sea.

With all of that said, let's get ready to start our journey into *Understanding the End Times*. Our focus in Session 1 will be establishing a deep love for the truth. This is the only thing safeguard from the rising tide of deception in our day.