

[Teaching today: Pastor Lee Wiggins]

Welcome, so happy to see all of you. I hope that you can find a seat in here, we are packed this morning. So welcome those of you who are joining us online. We have a big day here at the church, tons of activities afterwards, so I'm so thankful you're here. I would love to start out by just bringing this moment before the Lord and praying. Would you join me in prayer?

Lord God,



Thank You so much for letting us be in this place. Thank You for this Christmas season where we anticipate your birth, where we remember it, where we celebrate it, where we say thank You, Jesus, for coming to this earth to save us. We love You and we just thank You. It's in Your Name we pray. Amen.

We have been going through a series called DOCTRINE—what every Christian should believe. We are getting real close to the end of this series. Next week we're going to talk about something really cool, a thousand years of peace, of the Kingdom, a time called the Millennium. And then the following week we're going to talk about the doctrine of the incarnation, which totally fits with our time of the year with the incarnation of Jesus and His birth here on this earth.



Today we are talking about the doctrine of end times and I want to start out this way because I know that for many there's sort of a couple responses—just pure on curiosity, we get asked all the time to talk about this; others pure on fear, it's just like don't talk to me about that, that scares me; others who look at the world that's messed up around us and say yes, if any way God could come and make this all right we would be happy with that. But it's like a lot of things in life it's like getting from here to there is a weedy, burdensome thing for most of us and even the unknown is sort of overwhelming. And I just thought I'd start out this morning by reading a couple verses of Scripture that are meant to bring peace and bring hope and encouragement to you. I want to bookend what I'm about ready to share with hope and encouragement.

One of the things we know about the end times events as recorded in Scripture, when God has to deal with sin and root out all the ugliness and bring victory over that and slap that down, there's going to be some tough times in the midst that. What we want to talk about for just a moment is just to give you that peace that only comes from God, I want to read some words from 1st Thessalonians Chapter 4 starting at verse 16:

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

— listen to these next words:

¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

- I THESSALONIANS 4:16-18 (ESV)

And so we begin today saying the ultimate end of what is coming is we are going to be with Jesus, we are going to be in eternity if you know Jesus as your Savior. And he says here in this, hey listen, no matter what happens, no matter what the timing of everything is and exactly where we find ourselves in the midst of this, always remember this 1st Thessalonians 4, "**encourage one another with these words**" –

END TIMES

SERIES: DOCTRINE | WEEK 15 | 12.5.2021

Jesus is coming back. He's gonna take you, He loves you, He cares about you. He says a little bit later on in Chapter 5 he says listen:

⁴ But you are not in darkness, brothers,

— you're getting to hear all this, like, this isn't going to catch you as a surprise whatever's coming down in the future, whatever the order, however God has put it all together to happen, and I'm sure there's stuff that we can't even imagine right now, he says you're not in the darkness brothers:

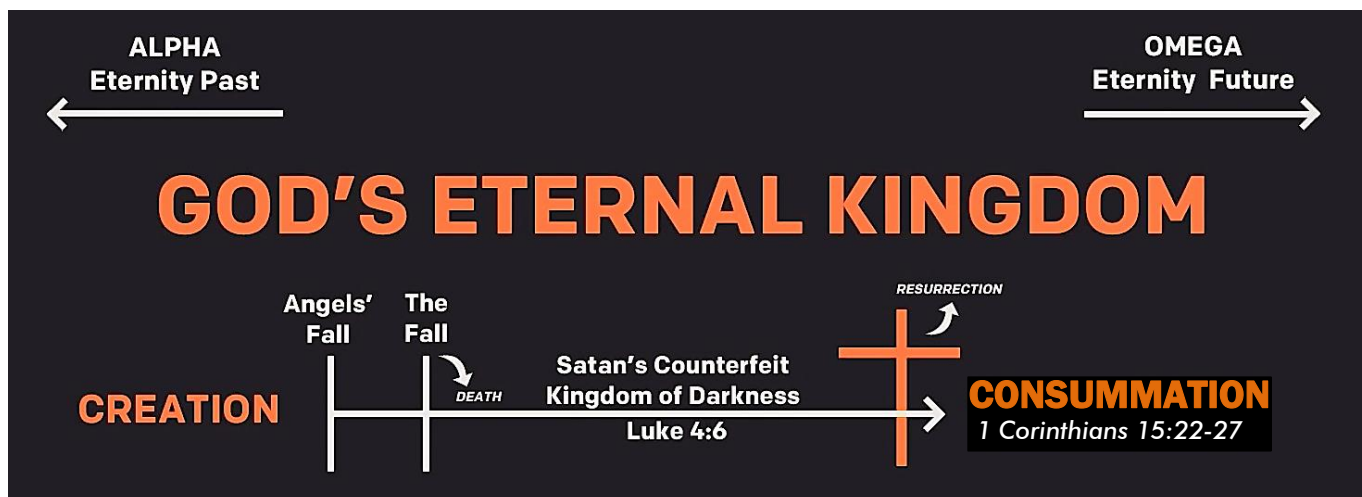
for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

– I THESSALONIANS 5:4-6 (ESV)

So as I share these thoughts with you this morning one of my hopes is that this will allow us to keep our eyes open. We've heard for years that Jesus is coming back. We've heard for years that there's going to be a tribulation, that there's going to be an Antichrist, that there's going to be a beast, that there's going to be hard times, and that God's going to do some difficult things to cleanse this earth before the final thousand years reign, a millennium that we're going to talk about next week. We've heard about that for so many years. We've heard about signs, we've heard about things that are going to come that are going to alert us to the fact that it's near, and some days you just feel like, *It's near! It's near! It's here, it's going to happen any moment now* and then it doesn't happen. And after a while you go just, *Whatever*.

And what we want to say to you today is I want you to be alert, I want you to be sober, I want you to live your lives that are pleasing and glorifying to God so that you *are* ready. So that when things begin to happen and when things start happening you know where to look in your Bible so that you can understand what's happening and why it's happening. Because I believe that as things begin to happen in these end times all of a sudden stuff we've read for a lot of years is going to start making sense in ways that it never made sense before. We thought we understood it, we thought we understood the order of what was going to take place, but when it all starts happening if you'll be alert, if you'll be keeping your eyes open, if you'll be reading your Bible you'll know where to go, you'll know where to look. So that's why I'm glad many of you are taking notes, many of you are following along with our podcast, with our Thursday night study that we're doing online on video, and then our Sunday morning messages.

So I'm going to start out, I'm going to take you through a couple charts this morning. I'm going to take you through the first chart that looks at the whole kingdom of God when you look at the beginning to the end, so let's pop that chart up on the screen right now.



We look at the world starting way back in eternity past and you look at it in eternity future. Jesus says, "**I am the Alpha and the Omega . . . the beginning and the end.**"¹ He existed in eternity past—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit—and again into eternity future. And we happen to be in this little period of time where we happen to get the opportunity to be on this planet earth. So we go back to the creation when God created this world perfect, made for perfect relationship with Adam and Eve there in the garden, and then Satan shows up because, you'll remember, the angels fell, we talked about that a few weeks ago. Satan shows up and he looks at them and says God told you if you eat of that you'll die? You won't surely die. In fact, God knows that if you eat of that you're going to have your eyes opened and, in fact, you'll be just like God. And they buy into that and mankind falls, and from that moment on you have this what I'm going to call today as Satan's counterfeit kingdom of darkness.

GENESIS 3:4-5 (ESV)
But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So you have the kingdom of light, you have the Kingdom of God, that's what we're going to see next week as we begin to talk about that in the Millennium, and you have this counterfeit kingdom of darkness. It's crazy but we fall for that counterfeit, we fall for what is false. And God wants to give us that opportunity but He invites us into relationship with Him. And coming out of that fall there's two things that are at play. The first thing is how to redeem His people, we've fallen, we're separated from God, how do you bring that separation back together? And He does that through the cross at Calvary. He comes, He lives a perfect life, and He sacrifices Himself for us. And so in doing so He takes on Himself our sin when he hung on the cross. The Scripture says that he became sin for us. He took our sin on Himself so that we could become the righteousness of God, so that He could place His righteousness on us. I'm just going to tell you today, if you've never put your trust in Jesus, that's God's plan to redeem us from this counterfeit system, this counterfeit kingdom of darkness.

2 COR. 5:21b-21 (ESV)
We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And then the next thing was how do we reclaim this kingdom? Everything you see on this earth, you look out, you were on vacation this summer, you went to some beautiful places, you looked out and said, "Isn't this gorgeous? This is heavenly." And for a moment you had a glimpse of what it was supposed to be, how it could have been. You could see yourself sitting there sipping lemonade forever in that location and then someone came along and said, "We've gotta go. We gotta go. Let's roll, let's roll." And that moment was gone. Yes, you have a picture of it. You look at that picture and you go, "That is just amazing." This place was meant to be so much more and because of sin it has completely been polluted, changed, destroyed. And so what God's plan is and what the picture that you see in front of you of God's eternal kingdom here is how God's going to put it all back together again.

So when we talk about end times, and we're going to get to that thought process here in just a moment, there may very well be this concept of all this bad stuff. What I want you to picture it as is actually it's taking what was messed up back there in the garden and continued by all of us feeding into that with our sin nature, and it's going to clean that whole mess up and bring it out to ultimately this beautiful spot where God's glory is seen again. The thing is the Psalms tell us:

¹⁶ The Lord is king forever and ever;

– PSALM 10:16b (ESV)

¹ Revelation 22:13

Psalm 103:19 says:

¹⁹ The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

– PSALM 103:19 (ESV)

What's amazing when you know that that's the case, that He created, that it is His Kingdom, and He is the King over all, that Satan—it's just, it's almost weird to think about this, remember Jesus goes into the wilderness in Luke Chapter 4 to be tempted. When He's out there in the wilderness to be tempted Satan comes to Him and brings this temptation to Him, he says in Luke 4:6:

⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will."

– LUKE 4:5-6 (ESV)

In other words, Jesus, if you bow down to worship me, You have all of this. Who do you think you are? Jesus, who was there at creation, who created all of this, now this counterfeit has stepped in and said hey, if You'll worship me you can have it all. And Jesus looks back at him and says to him:

"You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve."

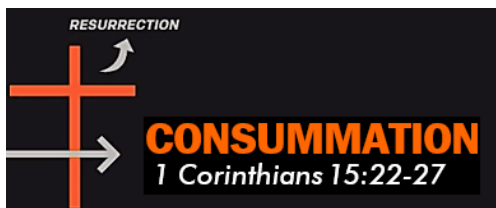
– LUKE 4:8b (ESV)

And you and I are being lied to on an everyday basis by the darkness of our age, by the enemy himself, and trying to call us into this worldly kingdom. And it's why we start out here in 1st Thessalonians saying hey, we want to put our eyes on Jesus, He is the author and the finisher of faith, He is the one who has created this and we want to follow Him.

HEBREWS 12:2 (ESV)

looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

If you look on the far right side of that chart you'll see the word there "Consummation." First Corinthians Chapter 15 really does an amazing job at sort of walking this entire chart that you and I have just gone over that looks at the eternity past all the way to eternity future, and 1st Corinthians 15 has a way of just putting together all of this in just a few short sentences. So listen to the progression that these verses share, 1st Corinthians 15:22:



²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

— yes —

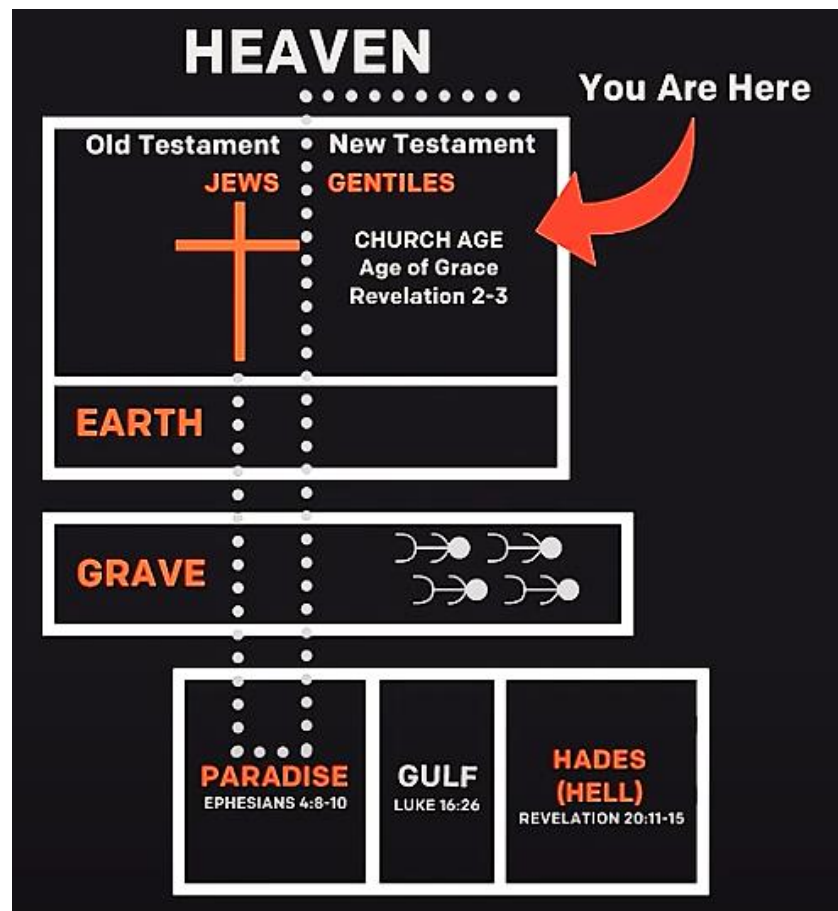
²⁷ For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet."

– I CORINTHIANS 15:22-27a (ESV)

God is working and God has a program and He is moving quickly and rapidly towards fulfilling that program when all things are made right again. That really is what the end time events are all about.

So let me just take a few moments and we're going to go to this next slide right now and going to take you to another chart, and as I take you this chart I'm going to start walking you through a picture of what has happened and what will happen so you sort of just get a framework in your mind. And that's my hope for you this morning in talking through this is that you'll have a framework so you'll sort of be able to picture where certain things happen and what has happened and what will happen.

God always works through a people so you will see on this chart that there was a time in which God worked through the Jewish people, that was the Old Testament of your Bible. And then Jesus came and He died on the cross, and after that He establishes this thing called the church, we talked about that last week. He is over the church, He is in charge of the church, and it is the system in which He's working within in our time. The first was to the Jewish people, to the church being to the Gentiles, and the cross really is the thing that separates that time in the Old Testament and the time in working within the church.



When Jesus died on the cross there's this verse that confuses a lot of us that says that when He died – let me just read it, Ephesians 4:8 it says:

⁸ Therefore it says,

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men."

⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

– EPHESIANS 4:8-10 (ESV)

And Ephesians tells us that when Jesus died He actually goes to the lower regions to Paradise and He preaches to those who were His people and He says we have won, the cross has won the victory over death, and He leads them out of there and towards Heaven.

Jesus tells this story in the New Testament about a man by the name of Lazarus and a rich man² that die and Lazarus goes to Paradise and the rich man goes to Hell or Hades, and it says there's this gulf in-between them, that's what we're picturing up here on this. So when Jesus dies on the cross He actually

² The Rich Man and Lazarus – Luke 16:19-31

END TIMES

SERIES: DOCTRINE | WEEK 15 | 12.5.2021



comes and He takes and empties Paradise and now the people go to Heaven. The Bible tells us in 2nd Corinthians Chapter 5, verse 8, that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord:

We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:8 (NKJV)

We now are with Him in Heaven, but He empties Paradise and one of the things that we want to talk about here in these few minutes that we have is how God goes about dealing with the wicked, how He goes about dealing with Satan, and what happens with Hell, Hades, and the lake of fire and the bottomless pit and this kind of thing as He cleans up. In Revelation Chapter 20 at the very end of the Bible, he speaks of this place Hades (Hell) that you see listed there on the right and he says this, Revelation 20, verses 11-15:

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- REVELATION 20:11-15 (ESV)

Now there's a lot written there, you ought to take some time and just meditate on that, but here is a key quick takeaway that he talks about here that I think is important that we know today. He talks about the books and these people that were judged by what was written in the books, they were judged based on their works. A lot of people say, "I'm a good person," and so if you want to get to God by your good works it never works, but those were written in the books and they were judged by those and they were thrown into eternity separated from God. But there is a book, the book of life and those whose names are found in the book of life it says will have eternal life. Those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and what took place on the cross will spend eternity with Jesus.

Now after the cross those who put their faith and trust in Jesus are now part of the church, the body of Christ; all these people around you that have put their faith and trust in Jesus, we are the church. Now we get to the book of The Revelation and a lot of people go, "Oh, my goodness. Let's... I don't know what to do with that, it's scary." I want to sort of help you think otherwise about that. The book of The Revelation is a revelation, one revelation of Jesus Christ, that's why we don't say revelations, a lot of people say that, it's just Revelation, it's a revelation of Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ shows Himself to His friend the Apostle John. Listen to this story for a moment.

The Apostle John is speaking in what's modern-day Turkey in one of the towns called Ephesus and as he's preaching, and he's preaching about the resurrection, Domitian the emperor says you will not talk about the resurrection. In fact, recant that. If you keep on talking about that I'm going to come after you. And John says I saw Jesus alive, He was my best friend, I saw the empty tomb, I was with Him, I saw His life, I'm not going to recant that. You just can't when you've seen it and you've been there and done that. So

END TIMES

SERIES: DOCTRINE | WEEK 15 | 12.5.2021

the emperor Domitian takes the Apostle John and he boils him in a pot of oil and he doesn't die. I mean, that's just hard to wrap your brains around, he doesn't die. So what he [Domitian] does is he banishes him to the island of Patmos. This is no sweet little vacation resort spot, this is a nasty, nasty spot. When he places him on the island of Patmos it is there that he has a revelation where he—and it's what the book of Revelation is all about—where God shows him what is to come.

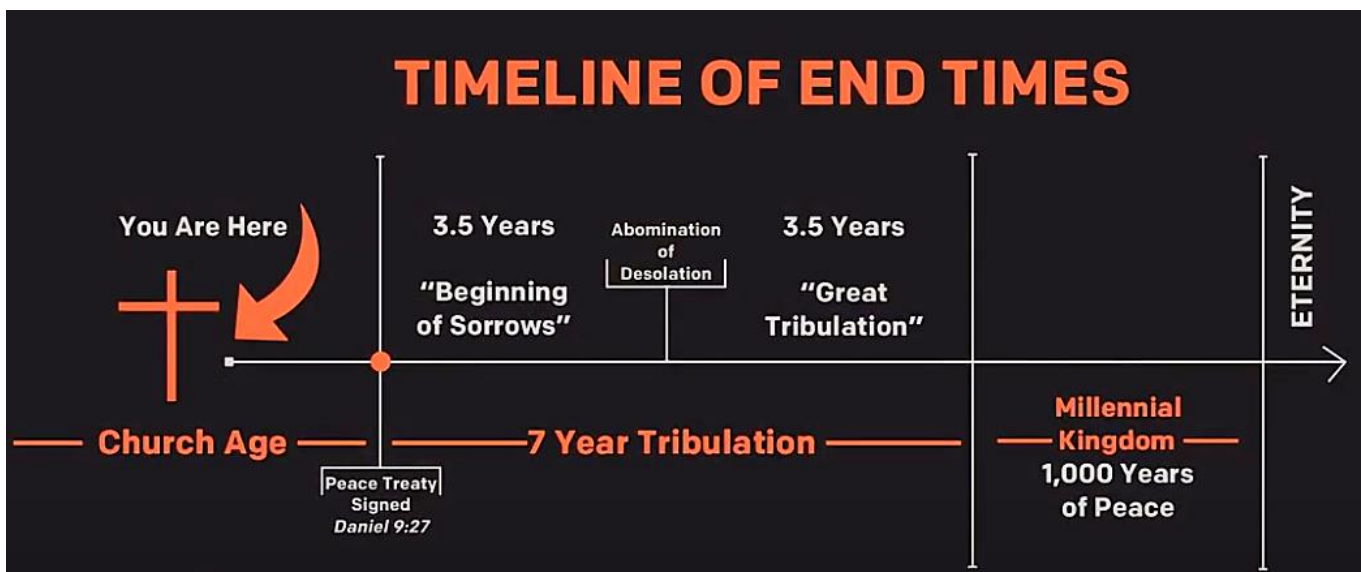
In the first three chapters of the book of The Revelation what is shown to John are the seven churches. They were historical churches at that time and He begins to share with them what they've done well and what they are not doing well, where their hearts are right and where their hearts are not right. And one of the things that is fascinating to me as I read those first three chapters of The Revelation is it says that Jesus walks among the churches.

²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

¹ "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.'"

– REVELATION 1:20 & 2:1 (ESV)

Picture that this morning, that Jesus even in our church this morning is walking around and He has some things to say about what's going on here. Where do we stand with Jesus? How do we respond to Him? What are the most important things in our lives? He even talks about materialism and stuff like that and he has something to say to us about that. And as we begin to look about what really matters and we start seeing the world through the eyes of Heaven and what God sees, and the throne room of God, it begins to change our perspective on the things of this earth. We're quick to say, "Man, things are messed up here," and then we go ahead and we get involved in the messed up things that are here as opposed to putting our eyes on Jesus. And John has the opportunity in this moment to put his eyes on Jesus. So let me take you quickly through a timeline of end time events and we're going to put the next chart up on the screen.



You'll see the little **YOU ARE HERE** right now, so what you have that is, where that arrow is, that's the Church Age, that's where we live, that's the age that has taken place after the cross. It's a very specific period of time where we can put our faith and trust in Jesus, where God is working in the churches across

our country, He's reminding us, He's warning us, hey, put our eyes on Jesus. That's the time that we're living in. Now as we begin to think about God cleaning up this mess called earth, the next major event to happen that you can be aware of is brought up in Daniel Chapter 9, verse 27. I'm going to read it to you and then we'll come back to this chart and you'll see what I'm talking about. He says:

27 "And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."

– DANIEL 9:27 (ESV)

You understand all that? Good. We'll move on then. Let's go back to the chart a moment. I sort of say that tongue-in-cheek a little bit because once – I just shared a little bit, I'll share here – it isn't like that was really hard to understand, it's just a lot of words and sort of some big words and thrown together and you're going what are we talking about here? You'll notice that first line there where it says a peace treaty is signed, what it is saying is that our world will become so divided and so at each other's throat that we will be begging is there someone that could pull us together, is there someone that could unify us?

Imagine if right now there was someone on the face of this earth that could take away all the things dividing us, can you imagine our response to that person? Imagine if that person said listen, the stuff that we're fighting about is going to be gone, all these factions, all of these terrorists, all these people up against Israel. And that's exactly what the Bible says here in Daniel 9:27 that's going to happen. There is going to be a peace treaty signed by the Antichrist, he's going to look like—remember, that's the thing you always had with Satan's counterfeit kingdom, there's going to be a counterfeit Christ—the Antichrist who is going to come and say I can make peace for you, and everyone's going to go wow, we want that.

In fact, he's going to say to Israel, who has not had a temple since 70 A.D., you know what, you guys can come and have your temple. You know that whole Temple Mount thing right now, barely a day goes by that you're not seeing some sort of attention flaring up there. Israel will say whatever it takes, yes, please, and they'll rebuild their temple and they'll begin their sacrifices again. You can picture in this room today how someone coming and offering peace, a peace that somehow is brokered by someone who when they explain it you're like yes, we'll take that all day long. And we're all looking at each other going that makes sense, too, but this is going to be an Antichrist and that will kick off The Tribulation.

And the Bible talks about The Tribulation in terms of a week, it's seven years and it's a longer discussion than to just explain it like that, but it's a seven-year period of time broken in two 3½ year periods of time. During that first 3½ years he will have made that peace at the very beginning and by the middle of The Tribulation he will come into this temple that he allowed Israel to build, and they were just like thrilled out of their mind to have happen, and he'll come in there and he'll set himself up as God in the temple and that is referred to as the "abomination of desolation." And that's why in this verse in Daniel 9:27 it referred to him as the "desolator." He is the one who comes to bring peace and he looks like he's bringing peace but he's a false Christ, he's a false messiah, and by the middle of The Tribulation he stands up in that temple and declares himself to be God.

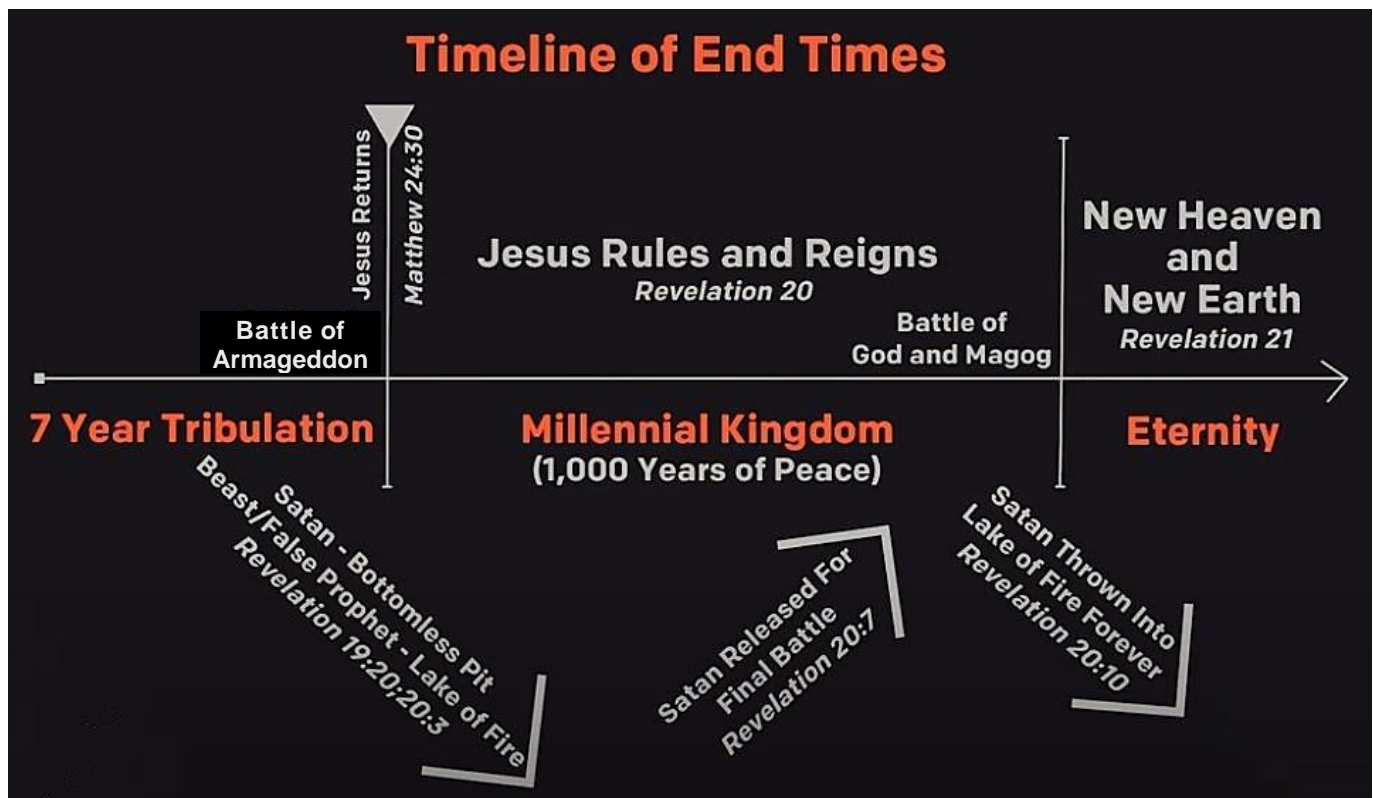
In the book of Revelation it goes through three series of events that take place in The Tribulation, it talks about seals, trumpets, and bowls. Seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, and it talks about this scroll that has these seals on them that as they are peeled back and unrolled another major judgment comes on to planet earth and the people of earth. And this scroll that it talks about in the book of The Revelation, this is a big chunk of this final book. We talked about it on our Thursday night study, if you want to go on the website you'll see that under the end times file there in the DOCTRINE series, but I'll give you just a quick

END TIMES

SERIES: DOCTRINE | WEEK 15 | 12.5.2021

once over. As He undoes the seals on the scroll it opens up a judgment onto planet earth and this scroll is the title deed of the earth and as God reclaims control over this earth and begins to bring His judgment on the sin and the destruction and Satan himself, He begins to roll out these judgments and that's where we see the four horsemen of the apocalypse and all of these different things. And each time that one of these judgments come out and as these seals and trumpets and bowls end there's this pause, there's this moment for opportunity for people to repent and say God, You are real, You are true, and they still, they just turn on Him even all the more and say we don't want anything to do with You.

And all of this culminates and you'll see it there on your screen at the end of The Tribulation in the battle of Armageddon. Let's go to this next slide of charts because you'll see this at the end of The Tribulation.



So The Tribulation's on the far left side of this chart. At the end of The Tribulation the armies of the world gather together in this place called Armageddon and they war it out. And when it looks like it is at its most desperate moment and no one's going to live as a result of what is going on there in this battle Jesus returns and this is an amazing moment. I want to read to you Matthew Chapter 24, verse 30:

³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, 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.

- MATTHEW 24:30 (ESV)

This is an amazing important moment to realize that there comes a moment when King Jesus comes back to this earth and He finishes off what has been going on, and it's a powerful, powerful moment. In fact, listen to these words, Chapter 19 of Revelation says:

²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast

and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

– REVELATION 19:20 (ESV)

You'll see on the – let's go back to the chart for a moment – on the left side of the chart here you'll see that there at the end of the battle of Armageddon Satan is thrown into the bottomless pit, the beast [Antichrist] and the False Prophet thrown into the lake of fire, that's the verse that I just read. Now here's what's fascinating, I just sort of wanted you to see it and I think you'll see it with the arrows that we've tried to put on this chart, we tried to do the best we could, but I just want you to see what the end is for Satan. You know, oftentimes it's nice to know who wins and then to choose that I want to be on the winning side.

Satan's messing with you right now, he's tempting you, many of us are just quick to give into that, understand this – he's a loser. Remind him that he's a loser, tell him that he's losing. And by the way, he knows that. That's why I think there is more activity, satanic activity going on right now than I personally believe I've ever seen in my lifetime, it's at least more visible. I think maybe in the past it was more hidden. He knows his time short and as he knows his time is short and this moment's coming quickly that the battle of Armageddon is going to take place, he's going to just get more and more riled up.

And so at the end of the battle of Armageddon Jesus wins, Satan is cast into the bottomless pit, and that leads us into the Millennial Kingdom, a thousand years of peace where Jesus will reign and rule here on earth. And we, those of us who have believed in Jesus, we will actually get to come back with Him and reign and rule with Him. We'll talk a little bit about that next week but this is this crazy picture of us coming and getting to reign and rule with Him. He will be in charge and He will rule this earth in its entirety. Everyone will follow Him. He will rule with an iron fist and He will get His way here on planet earth.

At the very end of the Millennium the Bible tells us there will be one last battle and for that last battle, the battle of Gog and Magog, and you'll see it up there at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, Satan is released for that final battle for just a very short amount of time. Revelation 20, verse 7, says this:

⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison

— And listen to verse 10:

¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

– REVELATION 20:7 & 10 (ESV)

I want to look at that right now and just see what happens. He's thrown in the bottomless pit, he's released at the final battle for Gog and Magog just for a short amount of time, we don't know how long it is but he is going to just go nuts for just a minute at the end of the Millennium where people get to choose – you want to follow him or not? And this is crazy that some would after all of this, after seeing how good Jesus is, some would, and at that point he will be defeated once and for all and thrown into the lake of fire and it will be after that that there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

All right. I have covered a lot of information really fast and I want to just give you a couple concluding thoughts. In the last chapter of the book of Revelation over and over it says this – I am coming soon, Jesus says I am coming soon, and right at that very end of the Bible, I think it's the next to the last verse [Revelation] 22:20 it says:

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

– REVELATION 22:20 (ESV)

That word *amen* means "let it be." Oh, Jesus come back. And I believe that that should be our prayer. As we see things getting harder and harder and we realize Jesus, You need to come back and make everything right because we know that when You come back this stuff starts to happen and Satan gets dealt with once and for all. I'll remind you again, 1st Thessalonians 4:17 where we began:

17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

– 1 THESSALONIANS 4:17-18 (ESV)

So when we pray *Jesus, come back*, the Apostle Paul reminds us hey, that's how you encourage each other, it's gonna be okay. Jesus has you.

At the very end of the Bible, Revelation Chapter 21, verses 3 & 4, it says:

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

– REVELATION 21:3-4 (ESV)

I want to leave you with that because at the beginning what was so beautiful in the garden before man fell is we had perfect relationship with God and everything was right. And everything we strive for in our world right now we want everything to be right and it's not, and we continue to remind you every week that we get together there's only one way to have everything right and that's to put your trust in Jesus alone for your salvation. And if you do, we look forward to a day when He does, when He physically makes everything right here and we get to spend eternity with Him.

One of the things that's on our hearts and minds as a church, and I'm going to transition a little bit here, in fact, the band could come up right now if you want to. One of the things that's on our mind here at the church a lot, we talk about it a lot, is how we can make sure that no one is separated from God, how no one has to go to Hell. And we know, we've just read it here in The Revelation, we've talked about it, there'll be people who say, "I don't believe it." That story of, uh, Lazarus and Jesus and, um, the rich man, that whole thing went down and Jesus at the end said even if someone could go back from the dead and tell them they still wouldn't believe.³ I mean there are certain people that have just said no, but there's still a lot of people that want to hear.

So that's why we do days like today just to bring us all together and to do the events that we do so you can invite your friends, so that we can be connected. It's why we do so many things we do around here, but one of the things we realize is that we are so blessed with everything that we have. The opportunities for us to hear the Gospel are just so many. The opportunities for us to share it are so many, but there are places where that's not the case. If you didn't go to church here this morning there were other great

³ Luke 16:31

churches in the area you could have gone to. There are other places in this world where that's not the case, and one of the places that we're pouring a lot of effort into is Senegal.

Back in the end of June we made a decision to do something just sort of radical, just – I think we told you about it at the time but it was sort of quiet. We heard of a need of a church that needed to be built in Senegal. We've been supporting this town, you've all been part of sending rice there during the pandemic, you all collected a bunch of money, sent a ton of food over there and provided for them, it was a big deal. But they had bought a piece of land for a church but they didn't have a building. And we talked to Pastor Mike and you know Pastor Mike's part of our church, he used to be part of our staff but now he's just doing the whole Senegal thing full-time all the time, and we just said what would it take to build a church in that place because they're ready to build it. He says they have plans and everything but he said it would take \$25,000. I said, "Mike, go build that church." He goes, "What?" I said, "Yeah, go build that church." I said, "Do you, if Calvary gave that money to build that church, like, would it get built?" Because, you know how it is in some of these countries, you know, you give money and nothing ever happens. "Oh, it'll get built." I knew that because Pastor Mike oversees every dime that goes over there incredibly well. I've watched him and listened to him for years.

Well, we had the opportunity this last week to see pictures of the people at that church. Do we have pictures of the people at that church? Uh, maybe we don't have it up here, but I have written a letter to you all and I would love for you to get it. In fact, what I'm going to do is I'm going to send it to you right this minute. If you get our newsletter you're going to get it right now. And on that letter it has pictures of that church, it just opened up a few weeks ago. Pastor Mike preached there last Sunday and the church that you funded back at the end of June is built, and so we had a [APPLAUSE], yeah, and it's exciting.

So as we had been talking about it and that was all coming together we just said, "Pastor Mike, are there more churches that need to be built?" And he said, "Oh, yeah, lots." "Like, what's lots?" He said, "Four." I said, "We'll build them." [APPLAUSE] So we're like let's just get it done, I mean, we couldn't believe it they had that done from the end of June when our church wrote the check until like a couple weeks ago they got the first one done. He says, "If we get that check by the end of this month, we can get them built here in the next four or five months again." I said, "For all four?" He goes, "Yeah." He said, "I'll make sure it happens."

He's over there preaching right now in one of those churches. We need to be praying for him. It's just awesome. And I just said, "Let's get it done over this Christmas season." I know it's a crazy time and everyone's asking for money, and even our own church we're trying to end the year in the positive and all that kind of stuff, but we're like, you know, there's things way more important. Let's choose to give it towards something that matters a lot. So here's what we're going to do. Right now we're sending you a newsletter with the pictures of that church and there's a link on that newsletter, if you check stuff on your phone it's probably coming through right now, you can just give. You have options when you give here, you can give to the general fund or you can give to missions. If you give to missions this month, it will go to building those four churches, they're \$25,000 apiece. If you just want to pay out \$25,000 and build your own church you can. I imagine, I mean, how many people can say, "I built a church." Right? And I'm sure Pastor Mike, if we need more than four, he'll find us more than four.

I do encourage you, church, as you get a chance, make sure you give your tithe to the church here because we still have lots of other missionaries to take care of, ministries to take care of, but if God's blessed you with some extra money and you just say hey, as a family we want to collect some extra money for Christmas to give towards these four churches, I'm convinced personally that all four are going to get built before the end, well, not built physically but we're gonna have the money for them before the end of the

END TIMES

SERIES: DOCTRINE | WEEK 15 | 12.5.2021

month. And so if you want to do that, just when you give today put your money in for the general fund but also whatever you put in for missions will go towards that for just this month. I'll just keep telling you what has come in. At the end of the month whatever's come in, if it's two churches we'll build two, if it's four we'll build four. If you guys go crazy and it's 20, I'll tell Pastor Mike you just need to move over there and find a way to build all these churches. Calvary's building lots of churches.

Church, I love that you care about the people over there and I've been there, the difference it's making over there is incredible. We do not want to see these beautiful people miss out on the opportunities we have to worship together and to come know Jesus. And he, Pastor Mike, just wrote me a note last night just telling about just some really cool things happening even as he was sharing over there, people coming to know Jesus, that are like really key crucial people in some of those villages, that when they come to know Jesus other people are going to follow. And we know our time short and before Jesus comes back we want to reach out with the Gospel to everyone we can get our hands on. So I'm going to say a prayer, I'm going to pray for this offering, a prayer for these gifts, and I'm just looking forward to seeing what you all do, church.

Lord Jesus,



Thank You so much for promising us that You're with us, that You care for us, that You love us, and thank You for our salvation. And Lord God, we pray for those who are not saved yet and these people in Senegal, for Pastor Mike as he's preaching over there today. And Lord, I pray that You would use this moment to have many people say, "Yeah, I want to give towards that." I pray that we'll be blown away by the amount of churches that get built in Senegal because we just boldly said let's just do it, and we're just going to rejoice. Lord, I pray a lot of people get saved. Lord, I just pray to You for the giving to the church here because there's so many things that are being done here that matter for eternity. And so I pray that You'll bless those gifts as well. Lord, we want to say with the words that end your Bible – come quickly, Lord Jesus, please come quickly, come quickly. We love You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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