

## END TIMES AS PICTURED IN THE FALL FEASTS

### Week 3 – Are We in End Times? (INTRO)

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 1:1-3

Are we in end times? YES! Who's the "we"? The context of this passage in Hebrews teaches that "last days" is a reference to Jesus' first coming which includes the current Church age. Yes, "last days" refers to now. BUT, when did these "last days" begin? 1 Pet. 1:20 - *He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.* The "last times" in this context are the times of the Messiah, from His first coming to His Second Coming.

But, what does the phrase "end times" mean? When we speak of "last days," what are we saying? What are YOU saying? What do YOU mean? The Biblical term "last days" and the term "end times" do not always refer to the same thing. They can refer to the current Church Age or they can refer to the future culmination of God's plan for Israel.

Last week we talked about the distinction between the Church and Israel. God has a plan for Israel. God has a plan for the Church. God's plan for Israel doesn't mean that all Jewish people are/will be saved. The Church of the Messiah Jesus, Christ, the Anointed One, is comprised of Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus. God created and chose Israel to accomplish His purposes for the world. God made a covenant with Abraham; Jewish people are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Church was birthed at Pentecost. Paul calls the Church a mystery not revealed in the OT.

If Israel and the Church are not distinguished from each other then there is no basis for seeing a future for Israel or a plan for the Church. If Israel and the Church are merged into a single program, then the Old Testament promises for Israel will never be fulfilled.

Replacement Theology – which I do NOT espouse – teaches that the Church is spiritual Israel, the Israel of God, and that the promises God has made to Israel are now being fulfilled by the Church. What does that say of God Who made specific promises to the people of Israel? The merging of Israel's destiny into the Church not only makes into one what the Scriptures understand as two, it removes a need for future RESTORATION of Israel. God promised to restore Israel. God has NOT transferred His promises to another group. God is a God of RESTORATION!

Here's THE question: What are the "last days" for the Church (Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus)? And what are the "last days/end times" for the ethnic nation of Israel?

#### End Times Terms for Israel:

"latter days"

- Deut. 4:30; 31:29; Jer. 30:24; 48:47; Dan. 2:28; 10:14

- Deut. 4:30 – *When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice.* During a time of distress in the future, there will be those Jewish people who will turn to God. Check Deut. 30:1-6 – after disobedience, God will bring the Jewish people back to Israel from a worldwide scattering and God will circumcise their hearts. There is no mention of the Church.

- Dan. 2:28 - *But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:* What was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar was the times of the Gentiles – Gentile powers dominating Israel: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the revived Roman empire (Tribulation; Time of Jacob’s Trouble) – and then the Kingdom of God is delivered. There is no mention of the Church.

- Dan. 10:14 - *Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come.* The 70 week prophecy in Dan. 9:24-27 speaks to Israel’s latter days including the building and restoring of Jerusalem following the Babylonian exile, the promise of the Messiah’s first coming, the Tribulation, and the Millennial Kingdom/Eternal State. There is no mention of the Church.

“last days”

- Isa. 2:2; Jer. 23:20; 49:39; Eze. 38:16; Hos. 3:5; Micah 4:1; Acts 2:17
  - Isa. 2:2 - *Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it.* This is speaking of the Millennial Kingdom. Mountain in Scripture often refers to kingdom. The Church is not noted.

- Eze. 38:16 - *and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog.* This is the war of Gog and Magog wherein an alliance of nations led by Russia and Iran will invade Israel. The Church is not noted.

- Hosea 3:5 - *Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.* Restoration of Israel in the last days. No mention of the Church.

- Micah 4:1 - *And it will come about in the last days that the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it.* This is speaking of the Millennial Kingdom. We don’t read of the Church.

“last day”

- John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48
  - John 11:24 - *Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”* Martha was Jewish. This was a Jewish teaching.

“latter years”

- Eze. 38:8-9 – In v. 1 God tells Ezekiel to prophesy against Russia re: the evil plan to attack Israel: In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword *and* gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. <sup>9</sup> You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.”

“time of the end”

- Dan. 8:13-17 – we are reading the background of Chanukah – the desecration of the Temple.
- Dan. 12:1-2, 4 – after a time of trouble (Jer. 30:7), there will be the resurrection of the OT dead – some to eternal life, some to eternal contempt. Daniel was told to seal up the book until the time of the end for Israel.

“end time”

- Dan. 12:9 - *Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end* – which concerns Israel.

“end of the age”

- Dan. 12:13 – time of resurrection of the OT saints after the Tribulation.
- Matt. 24:3-31 – Jesus’ Olivet Discourse encompasses signs for Israel at the end of the age: “birth pangs;” all in Judea flee to the mountains upon seeing the abomination of desolation; Sabbath is mentioned; false Messiahs are mentioned.

### Last Days Terms for the Church

“later times”

- I Timothy 4:1 - *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,*

“last days”

- II Tim. 3:1-7 - *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup> traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! <sup>6</sup> For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, <sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.;*
- Heb. 1:2 - *has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*
- II Peter 3:3-4 - *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, <sup>4</sup> and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For*

*since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation*

“last times”

- I Pet. 1:20 - *He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*

“last time”

- I Pet. 1:5 - *who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
- Jude 18 - *how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.*

“last hour”

- I John 2:18 - *Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the<sup>[a]</sup> Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.*

Last times for Israel: Tribulation/Millennial Kingdom

Last times for the Church – the entire present Church age – after Jesus’ ascension into heaven – Apostasy!

Why are these days called “last times,” “latter days” for the Church? What is next on God’s calendar for the Church? The Rapture.

What do the last days look like for Israel? Tribulation/Millennial Kingdom. Do we see passages about the Tribulation for the Church? No.

Do we see verses about the Millennial Kingdom for the Church?

Yes. II Tim. 2:12 – believers will reign with Jesus.

We need to remember that the Millennial Kingdom is an EARTHLY kingdom – and that God promised this kingdom to Israel – a RESTORED Israel. We need to remember that there will be a physical temple in the Millennial Kingdom – w/ sacrifices (Eze. 40 through 48). We need to remember that Jewish holy days will be observed during the Millennial Kingdom including Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. Why? This will be discussed in our lesson re: the Millennial Kingdom.

We don’t see the Church in the passages re: the Tribulation!

Israel's future includes the seven-year tribulation and then shortly before Christ's physical Second Coming, Israel as a nation will come to faith in her Messiah, Jesus. The distinct hope for the church is Christ's any-moment return.

## THE RAPTURE

The supernatural removal of the Church out of this world is called the Rapture. You need to know that the WORD “rapture” is not in Scripture. The term “rapture” comes from the Latin Vulgate Bible – *raptizo/rapturo*. This is the Latin translation of the Greek verb “caught up” which is found in I Thess. 4:17. The word “rapture” is not in Scripture; however, the truth of the Rapture is in Scripture. The Greek word for caught up in I Thess. 4:17 is *harpazo* which means to seize, to carry off by force; to snatch out or away.

The Apostle Paul teaches in I Thess. 4 that a specific group of believers – the believers from the Church Age – from Pentecost on - those who have been baptized into the body of Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13) - will be carried off. It will be believers “in Christ” who will suddenly be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The Holy Spirit did not permanently indwell OT saints. You need to know that there is ONE WAY of salvation throughout Scripture: by grace through faith in God’s revealed message which always points to the Messiah Jesus!

OT saints will be resurrected at the end of the Tribulation (Dan. 12:1-2).

There are three passages in the NT that point to the Rapture: John 14:1-3, I Thess. 4:15-18, and I Cor. 15:52-53.

John 14:1-3 – Jesus with the disciples met in the Upper Room in Jerusalem the night before His crucifixion to celebrate Passover.

Did the disciples understand? The disciples were actually anticipating the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth. The promise of first going to the Father’s house – in heaven – was new to them. Jesus, however, was explaining His return for them against the backdrop of the Jewish Wedding Feast about which they knew:

- The Father of the bridegroom negotiates a price for the bride.
- The bridegroom travels to the bride’s house.
- Betrothal symbol – drink from a cup of wine.
- From that moment the bride was declared sanctified or set apart
- Bridegroom would leave the bride’s home and return to his father’s home. The Bridegroom would speak these words to the bride before his departure: “Let not your heart be troubled. . . I go to prepare a place for you. . .and. . .I will come again”. We note two comings on the part of the bridegroom.
- The bride did not know the exact day or hour the bridegroom would return. She needed to be prepared at all times.
- Bridegroom would add onto his father’s home – bridal chamber.
- At the father’s command, the Bridegroom and the groomsmen (Judges 14; John 3) would travel to the bride’s home. The Bridegroom himself didn’t know the exact time. Note Matt. 24:36.
- The bride would be beckoned from the street by a shout.
- The entire bridal party traveled to the father’s home for a marriage feast (Mat. 25:1-6).

- The Bridegroom and bride went into the bridal chamber to consummate the marriage (Judges 14:12).
- When the marriage was consummated, there was a seven day marriage celebration during which time the bride remained hidden in the bridal chamber.
- At the end of the seven days, the Bridegroom brought his bride out for all to see.

I Thess. 1:6-10 – Paul told the Church in Thessalonica to wait for “His Son” from heaven and he told them that Jesus would deliver them from the wrath to come. Paul had taught the Thessalonians about the Rapture. They were anticipating this great event. They became deeply disturbed when some from among them died. It seems that they had concluded that the Rapture was only for living believers. Paul wrote to assure them that they didn’t need to be concerned about their deceased fellow believers, for all those who are “in Christ” and who “sleep” in Jesus (a euphemism for death) – will be caught up to meet the Lord also.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18 - *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words*

The resurrection of the body was not a mystery; the Hebrew Scriptures speak of a bodily resurrection. Job 19:26 - *And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God.* And, it was not a mystery that there would be people on earth when the Messiah returns (Zech. 14; Isaiah 61, 62, and 63. . . .). The mystery is the truth that some believers will not experience death but, rather, will be caught up to meet the Lord in transformed, immortal bodies – in resurrected bodies. The idea of receiving a resurrection body without first dying was new truth, never before revealed in the OT.

I Cor. 15:51-56 - God made human beings body and soul together (Gen. 2:7). Our ultimate perfection demands that both body and soul be RENEWED/RESTORED! Death results in the separation of the body and the soul. The bodies of believers in Jesus go to the grave and our souls go to the Lord. The separation continues until the resurrection (John 5:28-29). At the resurrection the bodies of believers will be joined to their souls. Believers will enjoy the eternal perfection of body and soul in the presence of God forever.

I Thess. 4:16 - three sounds at the Rapture: Jesus will descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. It hardly seems possible that the Rapture will be a SILENT event! If millions are removed from this earth, won’t the

world realize that something unique, supernatural, and amazing has taken place? OR, while the recent verbiage by the world has broadcast that Christians are terrorists, will those left behind think, “Oh, those terrorists have finally been disposed of.”

The shout of the Lord – a shout of command. Perhaps we can liken it to the command given to the Apostle John in Rev. 4:1 – “Come up here.” It may be like the command found in John 5:28-29 ordering those who are dead to come forth from their graves.

What did Jesus say when Lazarus was dead and in the tomb – for four days? He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” (John 11:43).

The voice of the archangel – there is only one other reference to the “archangel” – in Jude 9. He is Michael. And Michael is noted as the great prince who stands over Israel – the Jewish people (Daniel 12:1). Michael appears to be a protector. Perhaps he is present at the Rapture to protect the NT saints (which include Jewish people) from Satan and his forces as they pass through his domain. Eph. 2:2 – Satan is referred to as the “prince of the power of the air. There’s no indication of what Michael will speak. Perhaps it will be a word of VICTORY!

The trumpet of God – Many times the trumpet was blown in Israel’s history to assemble a gathering. It appears that this blast from God’s trumpet summons the NT saints to heaven.

We observe the clouds in the air. We need to remember that Jesus was received up into the clouds at His ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9). The angels said to the disciples that He will return in like manner (Acts 1:11). I’m suggesting that these clouds refer to the presence and glory of God (Ex. 14:19-24; 16:10; 19:9, 16; 20:21; 40:34-38). Here in this Rapture passage we see the visible presence and glory of the Lord. At the Rapture, the Lord Jesus appears and brings the saints into the presence of His glory!

We meet the Lord “in the air” (I Thess. 4:17). This meeting takes place somewhere between the heavens and the earth. This meeting “in the air” distinguishes the Rapture from Jesus’ Second Coming. At the Second Coming Jesus will come to earth.

You need to know that there is significant disagreement re: one important question concerning the Rapture: “When does the Rapture take place?” NOTE: there is no Rapture view without some difficulties.

Support of the pretribulationism/pre-trib view:

The pre-trib view depends to a large degree on maintaining a clear distinction between Israel and the Church.

## CONSIDER:

- The Church began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and is comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles to whom God has given great and precious promises.
- The nation of Israel was given many promises by God in the eternal, unconditional covenants of the OT. The delivering of those promises is based on God's faithfulness – on Him alone. God swore by Himself (Heb. 6:13) when He made the covenant promises to the nation of Israel. The fulfillment of these promises is for Israel.
- God had chosen Israel to serve as His witnesses (Isa. 43:10). God is not now using Israel as His witnesses. Why? The Jewish religious leadership rejected Jesus as their Messiah (Matt. 12).
- God is now using the Church, since Pentecost, as His redemptive tool – as His witnesses (Acts 1:8).
- When the Church (those “in Christ”) completes its task as God's witnesses, the Church will be removed from the earth (Rom. 11:25 – “fullness” means completion).
- You need to know that the Rapture doesn't begin the Tribulation. The antichrist making a peace treaty with the many (Israel and . . .) begins the SEVEN YEARS of Tribulation on the earth (Dan. 9:27).
- Those who are left behind on earth – those who are not raptured – will go through the Tribulation.
- When the Church is removed via the Rapture – being caught up to meet the Lord in the air (I Thess. 4:17), God will once again use the Jewish people as His witnesses. (Rom. 11:25 – blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles. . . .; when the Church is raptured, God will remove the blinders from the eyes of the Jewish people)
  - During the Tribulation, the focus of God's plan returns to national Israel and the fulfilling of the covenant promises made so many centuries ago.
  - The covenants made to Israel find their ultimate fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom – the Messianic Kingdom. AND the Tribulation is a necessary period of preparation to get Israel ready for the Messiah's – RETURN.
- During the Tribulation, God will seal 144,000 Jewish males – whom Scripture tells us are virgins (Rom. 14:4 – they are not defiled with women – they are virgins). These 144,000 – 12,000 from each tribe of Israel – will be used as God's servants and they will share the Gospel.
  - The result of the preaching of the 144,000: the greatest revival noted in the Bible - Rev. 7:9-10 This great multitude *are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (Rev. 7:14).
- God gives power to two witnesses (Rev. 11:3) who testify of God. It is thought that the two witnesses could be Moses and Elijah – Jews.
- Where is the Church during the Tribulation? In heaven.
  - The Church is not seen on the earth after Rev. 3 through the end of Rev. 19 – when the Church returns with Christ to the earth.

- The Church appears before the Bema seat/the Judgment Seat of Christ in heaven (II Cor. 5) while the Tribulation occurs on earth.
- The Church will celebrate the marriage of the Lamb in heaven while the Tribulation occurs on earth.
- God will accomplish RESTORATION for Israel during the Tribulation. Israel will be purged during the Time of Jacob's Trouble/the Tribulation (Mal. 3:3). God's Spirit will be poured out on the third of the Jewish people left at the end of the Tribulation (Zech. 12:10).
- Judgment will pour down on those who continue to blaspheme God during the Tribulation.
- If you believe that the Church will go through any part of the Tribulation or the entire Tribulation, what is the purpose of the Church during the Tribulation?

Do you see the distinction between God's plan for Israel and God's plan for the Church?

### QUESTIONS

Summarize what you learned today – and share it with those at your table.

Did you grasp anything new?

How does this impact your understanding of end times?

How does the warning of apostasy in the Church speak to you?

### SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

Review the Scripture passages in this handout.