

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Week 6 – Are We Living in the End Times?

October 11, 2016

### Hebrews 1:1-3

*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> 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; <sup>3</sup> who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*

The context of this passage in Hebrews teaches that “last days” is a reference to Jesus’ first coming which includes the current Church Age.

On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended and permanently indwelt those who trusted in Jesus, Peter quoted Joel 2:28 regarding the prophecy of God pouring out His Spirit in the last days, likening it to what happened at Pentecost!

Acts 2:14-17 - *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. <sup>15</sup> For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup> But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.*

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

This is the first and only time the word *antichrist* is found in Scripture. In this verse, a particular individual, THE *antichrist* is in the future. Yet, in mentioning the plural antichrists, John is referring to false teachers and false doctrine even in his day!

“Last days” refers to NOW – for the Church. When did these “last days” begin?

I Pet. 1:20 - *He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.* Peter is speaking of the Church. The “last times” in this context are the times of the Messiah, from His first coming until He returns.

Peter tells the Church...I Peter 4:7 - *But the end of all things is at hand (upon us; in the process); therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.* We need to know that Peter’s reference to the end is in the present tense. The action involved is a present reality with future consequences. “The end of all things has already begun.”

What does this mean to us? We need to be serious: we need to be sober – be of sound mind, be in ones right mind, exercise self-control – be under the control of the Holy

Spirit. We need to be watchful: we need to be circumspect – be guarded, be cautious, carefully consider what is transpiring!

Scripture affirms three basic facts about the coming of Jesus and the end of the age:

- We are living in the last days - We believe that He could return for us at any moment. His coming is upon us!
- God's timetable is not our timetable. We need to accept and rest in God's timetable!!
  - Heb. 10:37 – *For yet in a very little while, He Who is coming will come, and will not delay/tarry.* Jesus' return is ON TIME!
  - The Bible emphatically promises that Christ is coming again.
    - Phil. 3:20 - *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ....*
    - Titus 2:13 - *looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ....*
    - Heb. 9:28 - *so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

IN OTHER WORDS, JESUS' RETURN IS A DONE DEAL!!!! IT'S A CERTAINTY!

The Biblical terms “last days,” “end times,” “latter times,” do NOT always refer to the same thing. There are last days/end times for the Church which are different than the last days/end times for Israel. These terms, last days/end times, refer to the current Church Age. AND these terms, last days/end times, refer to the future culmination of God's plan for Israel.

God has a plan for Israel. God has a plan for the Church.

BUT REMEMBER – there's only one way of salvation throughout the Bible: by grace through faith in God's revealed message. His message always points to the Messiah.

#### GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL AS A NATION:

God chose Israel to accomplish His purposes for the WORLD!

God chose Israel to receive the law (Ex. 20), to be His witnesses (Isa. 43:10) to the Gentile nations – to tell them of the one true God, to serve as His instrument of blessing to the world (Gen. 18:18), to be the channel through whom the Messiah would come (Gen. 12:3; Gen. 49:10; Lev. 23; Dt. 18:15-18; Isa. 49:6; Isa. 53; Jer. 23:5-6;....), to be purged during the Tribulation and for the remnant to receive the promises from God through the Abrahamic Covenant in the Millennial Kingdom.

Because God chose Israel to engage in these tasks, God's will can NEVER be thwarted. Our God is a God of purpose (Isa. 14:24). AND, throughout the OT, God promised to RESTORE Israel. And, so we read:

Dan. 9:24 - *Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for*

*iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.*

In Daniel's 70 week prophecy, Dan. 9:24-27, which is the backbone of prophecy in the Bible, we see the restoring and building of Jerusalem following the return of the Jews to Israel following their exile to Babylon, we see the Messiah coming the first time (dying for others – not for Himself), we see the antichrist brokering a covenant with many of the Jews, and we see consummation/judgment!

Matt. 24 – this is what the end of the age looks like for Israel and the sign of Jesus' Second Coming. We see the Tribulation and the gathering of the Jews for Millennial blessings in Matt. 24:4-31. That Jesus is speaking to Israel in Matt. 24, take note of the birth pangs in v. 8. Rabbis have taught that the period leading up to the coming of the Messiah bears an exact parallel to the pregnancy and birth pangs of a woman expecting her baby to be born. Just as the labor pains of a woman in childbirth increase in intensity as the child is about to be born, so, too, will the "birth pangs" and agony of the Jewish people increase in intensity right before the Messiah comes and the Jewish people will be "reborn" and redeemed. v. 16 – Jesus tells those who are in Judea to flee to the mountains. v. 20 – Jesus mentions the Sabbath.

### GOD IS NOT FINISHED WITH ISRAEL!

BUT God is not CURRENTLY using Israel as His evangelistic tool, is He? God is currently using the Church as His evangelists. God will, however, use the Jewish people as His evangelistic tool again:

- 144,000 Jewish male virgins (Rev. 7:1-8; Rev. 14:1-5)
- 2 witnesses (Rev. 11)
- Zech. 8:23 – *...ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'*

What about Israel NOW as an instrument of blessing for the world?

Is God using Israel as an instrument of blessing for the world?

Rom. 11:11-15 - *I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. <sup>12</sup> Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! <sup>13</sup> For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, <sup>14</sup> if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world (salvation offered to the world) what will their acceptance be (when the third of the Jews remaining at the end of the Tribulation come to faith in Jesus and Jesus sets up His kingdom) – what will their acceptance be but life from the dead (in the Millennial Kingdom)?*

God's plan for Israel doesn't mean that all Jewish people are or will be saved. God created and chose Israel to accomplish His purposes for the WORLD. God chose Israel to set the stage for His plan – for the WORLD!

God made a covenant with Abraham and promised Abraham and his descendants, the Jews: land, seed, blessing. The Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional covenant – no conditions are required on the part of Israel. The Abrahamic covenant is a unilateral covenant – the fulfillment of the promises is on God’s side solely. Heb. 6:13 – *For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself...* God WILL deliver on His promise of the land, seed, and blessing to Israel and the WORLD will be blessed! The covenant addresses that when Israel is restored in the end times, it will be as life from the dead for the world (Rom. 11:15).

GOD is NOT finished with Israel. That’s SIGNIFICANT to grasp because it speaks to how you understand the entire Bible!

When we looked at the four approaches that are embraced by Christendom (Christians considered as a group), three of those viewpoints don’t include Israel!

Preterism does not. Preterism believes that all prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus came spiritually in 70 AD to destroy Jerusalem – to destroy His enemies.

The Historicist view encapsulates only the Church Age.

The Idealist approach speaks of only how the book of Revelation personally impacts the individual.

The Futurist view speaks to the future and Israel’s part in the future.

#### GOD’S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

- To be conformed to the image of Jesus.
  - Rom. 8:28-29 - ...<sup>29</sup> *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, ....*
  - II Cor. 3:18 - *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*
- To serve as His “witnesses”.
  - Acts 1:8 - *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* Note: this is speaking of the future when the Holy Spirit would permanently indwell believers at Pentecost.
- To serve as “ambassadors” for Christ.
  - II Cor. 5:17-20 - ...*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.*
  - I Cor. 2:14-15 - *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.* <sup>15</sup> *For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.*
- To make known to all the angels including the fallen angels, the manifold wisdom of God.
  - Eph. 3:9-10 – Paul was commissioned to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ<sup>9</sup> *and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery\**, *which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus*

Christ; <sup>10</sup> to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,

○ NOTE: I Pet. 3:19 – Jesus, between His death and resurrection, ...*went and preached to the spirits in prison....* It appears that He proclaimed the victory at the cross, ...*that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil* (Heb. 2:14).

- To receive spiritual gifts (Rom. 12; I Cor. 12; Eph. 4):

○ Eph. 4:11-16 - *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*

DO YOU SEE A DIFFERENCE IN GOD’S PLAN FOR ISRAEL AND GOD’S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH?

What are the “last days” for the Church? And what are the “last days/end times” for the 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.* “When you turn to the Lord” – that’s talking about Israel as a NATION turning to the Lord. This is speaking of restoration. This does not apply to the Church. The Church is not a nation; the Church is comprised of multiple nations. AND, those in the Church, Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus, have turned individually to the Lord since Pentecost when the Church was birthed. (Read Dt. 4 and esp. note: Dt. 4:25-29 )

• 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.** This CANNOT be about the Church in Dan. 9:24-27 – the angel has a message for Daniel and his people – the Jewish people – and for their holy city – Jerusalem (Dan. 9:24)!

“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.

- 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. You cannot substitute the Church for Israel as the context is solely concerning Israel!

- 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.

“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 is a Jewish teaching. Dan. 12:1-2 speaks of this resurrection FOLLOWING a time of trouble – the Tribulation!

“time of the end”

- 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 of the age”

- 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 (found in Daniel re: ISRAEL); Sabbath is mentioned; false Messiahs are mentioned.

Last Days Terms for the Church

“latter 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. No mention of Tribulation or the Millennium. BUT – departing from the faith for some!*

“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.; Quite different from God's wrath being poured out.

- 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;* Last times – from the first coming which includes the Church age.
- 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. Scoffers – have been in the mix for millennia. Scoffers are not judgments from God.*

“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.* From Jesus' first coming.

“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. Mockers – since the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Much different than God's wrath.*

“last hour”

- I John 2:18 - *Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the<sup>1</sup> Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.* There has always been the spirit of antichrist in the world (I John 4:3) – spiritual warfare. That there have been many antichrists typifies the last hour for the Church. THE antichrist will be revealed during the Tribulation.

**Last times for Israel – what does that look like?** Tribulation/Millennial Kingdom –  
Tribulation - the time of Jacob's Trouble  
Millennial Kingdom - the restoration of Israel

**Last times for the Church – the entire present Church age/from His first coming. What does that look like?** What is the recurring word in those passages about last times for the Church? **Apostasy!** Those verses/passages are speaking of the condition of the Church. These passages warn believers that worldly beliefs and lifestyles will become common in the Church. They are speaking of a decline within the Church. Jude states that apostasy had already occurred in the Church during the First Century (verses 3-4).

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.

Israel's future includes the seven-year tribulation and then shortly before Christ's return to Jerusalem, Israel as a nation will come to faith in her Messiah, Jesus.

On the other hand, the distinct hope for the church is Christ's any-moment return for the Church. And, the Church will rule and reign with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.

SUMMATION: When we look at the OT usage of end-times terms, we see that it does not refer to the Church Age. The OT uses end-times language to refer to the Tribulation period – the time leading up to the coming of the Messiah to set up His kingdom on earth. And, we read multiple passages about the Millennial Kingdom on earth in the OT.

End times for the Church is apostasy (note Jesus parables in Matt. 13; note the book of Jude).

### APOSTASY

- Gk. word *apostasia* – a defiance of an established system or authority; a rebellion; an abandonment or breach of faith.
- It is critical that all believers/Jesus followers understand:
  - How to recognize apostasy and apostate teachers
  - Why apostate teaching is so deadly
  - The genuineness of their salvation. II Cor. 13:5 – we need to...*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*

### QUESTIONS

Any V8 moments?

How shall we then live? How are you going to apply what we discussed today to your life, to your walk with the Lord?

Do you understand God's plan for Israel and God's plan for the Church? Why is a distinction between Israel and the Church important?

What are your thoughts about "end times" as it applies to Israel, as it applies to the Church?

If apostasy plagues the Church, what should be our role within the Church?

For what are we to be watchful? Why?

### HOMEWORK

Reread the notes from week 6 and review the Bible verses and passages.

What is your understanding of God's plan for Israel and God's plan for the Church?

Why is this important?

How do you view end times? Support your view with Scripture.

Read the handout for week 7 when you receive it via Email.

Share what you have learned thus far about the book of Revelation with a believer and/or with a non-believer.