

Session 2

Defining the End Times

– What are the End Times all about? –

A. Introduction

1. The End Times are a part of the Big Picture of God's eternal purpose and redemptive plan for mankind.
2. As we study the End Times, it is important for us to see God's big picture so as to correctly connect with and interpret the entire redemptive story of God.
3. Seeing God's big picture will help us understand God's heart and reason for the dramatic and climatic events that will take place.
4. The End Times are a vital part of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 24:14). The neglect of it causes the Church to lose the correct and complete picture of what the Gospel is about.
5. There are three negative effects if we neglect understanding the End Times:
 - a. We do not preach the whole counsel of the Gospel of the Kingdom, which includes:
 - i. Salvation by grace;
 - ii. Repentance;
 - iii. The Kingdom of God.
 - b. We lose the understanding of Eternity, which results in us not living our life with an eternal perspective (2 Cor. 4:16–18).
 - c. We do not yearn for the return of Jesus and the establishment of the Kingdom of God here on earth (Matt. 6:10; 2 Pet. 3:12; Tit. 2:13).

B. Defining the End Times

The End Times refer to the final hours of human history before the Second Coming of Jesus. It specifically refers to the final seven years of human history before the return of Jesus. (We will look at the End-Time timeline in a subsequent session.)

C. What are the End Times All About?

1. The End Times are about more than just a series of events that will happen. The End Times are about the return of a Person — Jesus, our Messiah and King, to establish His eternal Kingdom here on earth.
2. The End Times are also a period of great turmoil and upheaval where many positive and negative events will take place simultaneously (Isa. 60:1–3; Joel 2:11).
 - a. Great conflicts and tumultuous events are the result of God’s desire to remove evil, wickedness, injustice, unrighteousness and sin, while Satan and his followers are fighting back to oppose all of God’s plans (Dan. 7:13–14; Rev. 1:7–8).
3. In God’s big picture, the End Times are also about restoration. God is restoring His original plan for mankind and for the earth. This is what the fullness of redemption is about.
 - a. In Genesis 1 – 3, God ordained a three-fold eternal plan and purpose for man:
 - i. Man was formed and placed in the Garden of Eden on earth. It has always been the plan of God for mankind to dwell on the physical earth with a physical body (Gen. 2:8).
 - ii. Man walked with God in the cool of the Garden. It has always been God’s desire to have an intimate relationship with mankind and dwell in close proximity with us (Gen. 3:8).
 - iii. Man was given dominion over the earth. It has always been the eternal mandate of God for man to rule and reign with Him on earth forever (Gen. 1:26–28).
 - b. However, Adam was tempted by Satan and fell into sin, resulting in the loss of an intimate relationship with God, and his dominion over the earth was given to Satan (Gen. 3:1–7).
 - c. As a result of the fall of Adam, God initiated a salvation plan and restoration process for mankind in Gen. 3:15 that will culminate with the Second Coming of Jesus.
 - d. In God’s time, Jesus Christ came as the Last Adam to reverse the curse of sin and to restore all that was intended for and through the First Adam, but which had been lost due to his fall in the Garden of Eden (1 Cor. 15:45).
 - i. Jesus overcame Satan’s temptation in the wilderness in Matthew 4

- and Luke 6, which was the re-enactment of the temptation of Adam in Genesis 3;
- ii. He died on the cross to pay for our sins and to redeem mankind;
 - iii. He took back the dominion of the earth as a Man and gave it back to the Church (Eph. 1:22–24);
- e. Jesus will return as a divine Bridegroom for a Bride who will partner with Him to remove every sin, evil, wickedness and Satan from the earth.
 - f. He will continue the restoration process and establish the Kingdom of God for 1000 years on earth in order to prepare the earth for the coming of the Father.
 - g. Thus, the salvation of God is more than saving us from hell's fire, but about God restoring us to His original plan for us as seen in Genesis 1 – 3, in all its fullness.
4. The End Times are also about transition. Theologians commonly call it the Eschatological (or "End Time") Transition. It is about global transition of this world from this Age (i.e. natural human history) to the Age-to-come (i.e. the Millennial Age) and eventually to Eternity.

D. The Original Plan of God for Mankind

1. There are four foundational aspects of God's will for mankind that are necessary for the fullness of God to be experienced by mankind:
 - a. the supernatural aspect;
 - b. the physical aspect;
 - c. the governmental aspect;
 - d. the relational aspect.
2. All four aspects are part of God's original plan for mankind when He created us in Genesis 1 and 2. The Millennial Kingdom is where God's restoration process towards the fullness of this plan shifts to the next level.
 - a. All four aspects form the real and true picture of the fullness of our destiny.
 - b. Our eternal and primary identity in Christ is centered on these four aspects of God's will for us.
 - c. We will only step into the fullness of God's will for man when all four of these dimensions come together (Eph. 1:9–10).

3. To understand God's original plan for man, we need to understand why God created the earth and the human race.
 - a. From eternity past, God has always desired relationship
 - i. God yearns as a Father for a family that lives in wholehearted love as the sons of God and the Bride of Christ. God wants a family of voluntary and wholehearted lovers of the Father and of Jesus (2 Chron. 16:9; Matt. 22:37–38; 2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 19:7).
 - b. The Father's original plan was to have a family who would govern and rule all creation with Him. He gave man dominion over the earth and this is an eternal mandate and assignment for all mankind (Gen. 1:26–28).
 - i. The First Adam lost this at the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3) but the Last Adam took it back in the wilderness after 40 days of fasting (Matt. 4) and at the cross.
 - ii. The dominion mandate is being progressively restored but will only reach its fullness during the Millennium.
 - c. God's original plan is to place mankind on a physical earth (i.e. Garden of Eden) where He will relate with man face-to-face in a physical paradise (Gen. 2 – 3).
4. We need to have a correct Biblical understanding of God's redemptive plan for mankind. God's redemptive plan for mankind goes beyond saving us from hell's fire. It is to save us to become His children and the Bride of Christ.
5. God's redemptive plan for mankind is the restoration of His original plan for mankind — a face-to-face relationship with God the Father in a physical paradise, and having dominion over earth while functioning in the supernatural realm.
 - a. Scripture begins with God living face-to-face with Adam in Gen. 1 – 2. The Bible ends with mankind relating to God face-to-face in Rev. 22:4.
 - b. Scripture begins with the river of life and the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. The Bible ends with the river of life and the tree of life in the Eternal Garden in Rev. 21 – 22.
 - c. All the plans of God for mankind in the first two chapters of the Bible will be fully restored by Him through Jesus Christ in the last two chapters of Bible.

- d. This is the storyline of the Bible and human History. This is the story of God's restoration and redemption plan for mankind.

E. The Redemptive and Eternal Plan of God (Eph. 1:3–23)

1. Apostle Paul gives us one of the clearest pictures of God's original and eternal plan for mankind in Eph. 1:3–23:
 - a. The desire of God to bless us with every spiritual blessing from heaven — the supernatural aspect (Eph. 1:3);
 - b. The desire of God for us to live with Him in love — the relational aspect (Eph. 1:4);
 - c. The desire of God for us to rule and reign with Jesus — the governmental aspect (Eph. 1:22–23);
 - d. The fullness that comes with the coming together of the heavenly and earthly realms — the physical aspect (Eph. 1: 9–10).
2. "Blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (v.3)
God has ordained for every supernatural and heavenly blessing that exists in the heavenly realm to be released to us in due time.
3. "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (v.4)
This is His original plan for mankind — one that He had decided on even before the foundation of the world.
4. "Holy and without blame before Him in love" (v.4)
It is God's desire to have an intimate relationship with us. We shall be wholehearted in love, blameless and holy before Him (2 Cor. 6:14 – 7:1).
5. "Adoption as sons...to Himself... according to the good pleasure of Himself" (v.5)
It is God's desire to have a family and to adopt us as His children. This is His plan that brings Him delight and excitement.
6. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (v.7)
Part of the salvation plan of God is to redeem mankind by the blood of Jesus so that all our sins are forgiven in Christ.

7. *“That in the fullness of times He might gather in one all things in Christ...which are in heaven and which are on earth”* (v.10)
The fullness of God’s plan will be completely manifest when the heavenly and earthly realms come together.
8. *“He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things”* (v.22)
God has given all authority and dominion of the earth to Jesus.
9. *“Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.”* (v.23)
The Church will be God’s vehicle to express His fullness and His purposes in the heavenly and earthly realms.
10. Only Jesus can bring together the four realities of God’s Kingdom on earth — the supernatural, physical, governmental and relational aspects. As One who is fully God and fully man, He is the only One who is able to bring both realms together (Eph. 1:10).