

Session 3

How do we Study the Subject of the End Times?

A. Introduction

1. The Bible has provided a wealth of information pertaining to the End Times – the personalities, events, signs, trends, and what will happen. There are at least 150 chapters in the Bible that talk about the End Times.
2. It is clear that God wants us to know and we can and should know about the End Times. We should develop understanding for what is about to happen prior to the return of Jesus (Jer. 23:20; 1 Thes. 5:1–3).
3. We must not be illiterate or ignorant of the biblical narrative concerning the End Times. We must develop clarity, understanding and conviction from the 150 chapters in the Bible pertaining to the End Times.

B. Principles of Approaching the Study of the End Times

1. Do not be overwhelmed or be intimidated by the amount of information regarding the End Times.
2. Be patient and develop a plan on this journey of developing clarity and understanding. Diligence and intentionality are key to growing in this.
3. The primary purpose of studying the End Times is not simply to acquire knowledge and information, but to develop conviction that leads to a response in accordance to the Word of God (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18).
4. The Bible makes it clear that we can and we will understand with clarity the heart of God concerning the End Times. Therefore, we must be diligent and intentional in developing clarity and understanding of it (Jer. 23:20; Dan. 9:22; 10:12–14).
5. Prayer is a major key to unlock revelation, understanding and insight into the Word of God pertaining to the End Times. It is vital and crucial component in our study of the End Times.

C. Seven Practical Steps to Studying the End Times

Step 1: Set your heart to gain understanding of the End Times

- a. Decide and determine that this is what you want, and come before God with a spirit of humility and an open heart to learn and receive.
- b. The Lord sees our heart's posture and desire to know and understand.
- c. It is important to position our hearts to receive revelation and wisdom from the Lord because mere intellectual knowledge is insufficient.

Step 2: Gather detailed information about the End Times from the Bible

- a. The Bible has to be the ultimate benchmark of what is going to happen in the End Times. Everything that we believe about the End Times has to be from the Word of God.
- b. There are at least 150 chapters in the Bible pertaining to the End Times.
- c. Knowing which books and passages to focus on during your study will help greatly.
- d. External sources of information can help provide understanding of the more difficult passages of Scripture where needed, but ultimately, whatever does not line up with Scripture has to be discarded.

Step 3: Develop clarity

- a. Give yourself a five-year timeframe with a clear plan and schedule to study the passages. After the five years, another five-year plan can be made.
- b. Begin by reading through the Biblical passages pertaining to the End Times. Take time to familiarize yourself with the information and details in these 150 chapters, with the aim of understanding the heart of God.
- c. Drawing up your own charts for illustration and making your own personal notes will help greatly in developing clarity.

- d. Ask questions, search the Scriptures, and if you are studying with a community of people, dialogue and discuss with one another regarding what Scripture says about the End Times.
- e. Having clarity will eventually lead to insight and understanding. Furthermore, God promises that, *“In the latter days, you will understand it perfectly”* (Jer. 23:20).

Step 4: Develop a personal conviction

- a. While having clarity, insight and understanding are good, they will not be sufficient to bring about change in our lives. It is only when we are convicted about certain truths that we will take actions to respond.
- b. Conviction will grant us strength to withstand differing opinions, while a lack of conviction will make it easier for us to compromise.
- c. Even Scripture exhorts us to be convicted and hold fast to truth, so that we will not be deceived: *“That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting..”* (Eph. 4:14).

Step 5: Pray

- a. Bathe the study of the Word with prayer and birth the understanding of the Word through prayer.
- b. We cannot neglect this vital step as it is in the constant engagement of our hearts with God in prayer as we study His Word that understanding and conviction is birthed. Without this, we will simply be increasing our intellectual knowledge, but not necessarily in understanding God’s heart.

Step 6: Respond

- a. When we believe that something is true, we need to respond and align our lives to that truth. As we gain understanding of the End Times, we need to evaluate and see if there are any areas of our lives that need to be aligned in light of new understanding that we gain.

- b. It is vital to respond once we see and know where we need to respond. Having an attitude of “we still have time” may lead us to passivity and lukewarmness if we do not respond to the truth that we already have.
- c. While a response is immediate, change in our hearts will take time. If we hear but do not respond, our hearts will eventually become dull to His Word.

Step 7: Be a voice

- a. In this hour, God is calling forth ones who will arise to declare His heart regarding the End Times. He promises in Jer. 3:15: *“And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.”*
- b. We do not need to perfectly and fully understand before we speak. As we hear and respond in our lives, we can go forth to speak to others who have not yet heard whatever it is that Lord has given us understanding of from His Word.

D. Important Historical Dates and Events Pertaining to the End Times

Here are some important dates for us to take note of in history that will inform us in our study of the End Times:

1. 722 BC: Invasion of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by Assyria that resulted in the exile of Israel from the land.
2. 701 BC: Invasion of Southern Kingdom of Judah by Sennacherib of Assyria during the reign of King Hezekiah.
3. 606 BC: The first attack on Jerusalem led by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
4. 586 BC: Invasion by Babylonian army led by King Nebuchadnezzar that resulted in the deportation and captivity of the Jewish people to Babylon for 70 years.
5. 539 BC: The overthrow of the Babylonian Empire by the Persian Empire led by King Cyrus.
6. 536 BC: The first return of 50,000 Jewish people to Jerusalem led by Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem as a result of King Cyrus’s decree.

7. 516 BC: The completion of the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem.
8. 175 –165 BC: The control of Jerusalem gained by Synchro-Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes and the desolation of the Temple, which led to a Jewish uprising led by Judas Maccabee.
9. AD 70: The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Emperor Titus of the Roman Empire which resulted in the Diaspora.

E. The Importance of Knowing and Understanding These Dates and Events

1. All biblical prophecies in the Old Testament (OT) have dual or double fulfillments:
 - a. Partial or near fulfillment: Refers to fulfillment of prophecies in the time and era of ancient Israel and Judah in the OT. 722 BC and 586 BC are two vital dates during which many prophecies were partially fulfilled.
 - b. Complete, ultimate or future fulfillment: Refers to fulfillment of prophecies in the generation of Jesus' return, the Millennial Kingdom and Eternity.
2. All that has happened in 722 BC and 586 BC serve as powerful prophetic pictures and foreshadows, and give us insight into what will happen at the End of the Age.

F. Main Teachings on the End Times in the Bible

1. Main teachings in the OT on the End Times are primarily in the Major and Minor Prophets, which are divided into three different periods:
 - a. Pre-Exilic period (before 600 BC) — the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Micah, Hosea, Amos, Joel, Jonah, Obadiah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah;
 - b. Exilic period (600 to 536 BC) — the book of Daniel;
 - a. Post-Exilic period (after 536 BC) — the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.
2. Main teachings in the New Testament on the End Times are primarily through three teachers:
 - a. Jesus (AD 30) — Matthew 24 – 25, Mark 13 and Luke 21;

- b. Paul (AD 50) — 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy;
- c. John (AD 90) — the book of Revelation.