

31 – END TIMES: INTRODUCTION

I. A Growing Ignorance

A. The Past: An Abundance of Teaching

- Our thinking concerning the prevalence of teaching about prophecy is based on the past.
- Books, conferences and sermon series were very prevalent in the past.
- In the past, a portion of the teaching was marked by sensational claims.
- Sensational interpretations took precedent over what the scripture actually communicated.
- Every few years saw the emergence of a teacher who made a prediction about the timing of the Lord's return.

B. The Past: The Impact on the Church

- North American believers appeared to “burn out” with an overemphasis on prophecy.
- Failed predictions discredited prophecy and ultimately Christianity.

C. The Present: The Deficiency of Teaching

- While we tend to operate with an eye to the past, there is a deficiency of understanding today.
- Aside from Christ's return, believers have no understanding concerning the end-time events.

D. The Present: The Impact on the Church

- With no understanding concerning prophecy, believers are open to false and sensational claims about the end.
- There is a tendency to downplay the eternal destinies of mankind.
- There is a rise in antisemitism among believers.
- Evangelism of the lost becomes less of a priority for believers.

II. Approaching the Issue of End Times

A. The Issue of Israel

- It must be recognized that one's view of Israel will affect one's understanding of prophecy.

B. Biblical Approach

The Call to Believe: Discovering Answers to Your Questions About God and His World

Scripture Daniel 12:8-13 (ESV)

⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?” ⁹ He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. ¹¹ And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. ¹² Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 days. ¹³ But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days.”

- Like believers today, Daniel still wants to know more about what will take place in the future.
- The angels tell Daniel that the teaching is complete, basically he has everything he needs to know.
- The implication for believers today is that we have all that we need to know recorded in the scriptures.
- Many people will get saved (purified), but the wicked will continue to act wickedly (sin).
- The wicked will not understand what is happening.

Scripture Matthew 24:36-40 (ESV)

³⁶ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.

- The wise will understand what is happening as we move closer to the time of Christ’s return.