

REVELATION

Introduction w/answers

End Time Study Background

It seems that now more than ever we appear to live in a world turned upside down. Everywhere we look we see injustice, pain, suffering, turmoil and political unrest. What is happening, is God still in control or has man somehow wrestled control away? Is it hopeless, is this the “end” everyone fears? Will a nuclear or natural disaster finally come that destroys us all?

Today as we pass another Easter Holiday we find ourselves asking the same questions the disciples asked two thousand years ago, “When will this happen? What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world?” Like the disciples then we’d like a sign, an indication of when Christ will return, and each of us would like that information for different reasons, just as the disciples who wanted him to return to overthrow the oppressive Roman Government. We are anxious for His return in order to end the injustices, the pain, the suffering, and we yearn for a time of peace, a peace we know we can only have when He is reigning as King of Kings. When will this happen and what will be the signs that His return is imminent?

This week marks the beginning of a journey looking into God’s Word about what He would have us to know about Christ’s second coming and the end of this age. Using the Book of the Revelation as our guide we’ll allow His Holy Spirit to open our eyes to what lies ahead, what the signs of those times will be, and what we are to do with this information between now and Christ’s return. Knowing these things will provide us with a peace that passes all understanding as we face the challenges of the days ahead. God is in control, He is on the throne and His plan of salvation for man will not fail. I’ve read the back of the book and through Christ we win!

How are we to think about the last days leading up to Christ’s return? Where are we in God’s plan for His Son’s triumphant return? What will His return be like? What will we be doing in His kingdom? Are we allowed to even know these things, should we even dare attempt a study of future events? What are we to do with this book called the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ? Why is it in the Bible and can we even hope to understand any of it? These and many other questions are all things we’ve asked ourselves from time to time.

Be assured that as we begin this study God is very much leading all of us to know Him in a deeper and more intimate way than perhaps He ever has as He reveals through His Son Jesus His plan for His creation, His people, and His kingdom in the coming days. Using our Bible as our only tool for interpreting prophecy let’s commit to this study with an open mind, an open heart, and a prayer that God will bless us through this study, equipping us to stand firm with the Gospel of Christ in the coming days.

Before we actually look at Revelation itself lets consider some of the end time instruction Christ and His Apostles give us in other New Testament books. It will prepare us and help us to open our eyes to the truths contained within Revelation itself.

Let’s consider the following questions for our introductory lesson:

1. Make a list of recent events or headlines that indicate to you the return of Christ is near based on the following three headings: (I listed about 25 different things when I did this.)

a. Lifestyle (Apostasy)

i. ANSWERS

Christ didn't actually walk on water

Judas was a good guy

Abortion is OK

Lifestyle choices

Mary wasn't a virgin

Evolution - bird-man connection found - not creation

Sexual abuse by church leaders

Church related crime on rise - abuse of funds, stealing, power abuses, etc.

b. Environment

i. ANSWERS

Bird Flu

Mad Cow

Earth heating up, polar cap melting

Ozone layer shrinking

Fish kills

Running out of oil

Earthquakes

Tsunamis

Hurricanes, Cat 4, 5

Early Tornado season

c. Political

i. ANSWERS

Globalization of the world economies

Euro currency

China driving 20% of the world demand for luxuries and oil

Nuclear weapon capabilities in third world countries

Middle East unrest wide spread and all time high

2. What does Christ tell us in Matthew 24:4-8 and verses 36-39 about the coming end times? How does Genesis 6:5 relate to this?

a. ANSWER: That these things mankind think of as signs aren't signs of His coming but only preliminary, like birth pangs, leading up to his return. That in the day when He returns people won't be looking for him and that His coming will be like a thief in the night, at a time when we think not about His return.

3. Given what Christ tells us how does our list from question 1 stack up against what Christ tells us?
 - a. ANSWER: Not even close, these are man's signs, the signs of His coming are deeper and can only be discerned spiritually through the leading of the Holy Spirit. In fact, if we look back over history we can see the "signs" we listed in question one showing up all the time. Surely the Jews must have believed the end was near as Hitler slaughtered them by the millions, and how about the days of the black plague in Europe, or the volcanic eruptions of Pompeii, etc. Over time we see the same signs over and over, wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes in diverse places, etc., but Christ tells us the end is not yet. He does tell us what the real signs are - they are signs we'll study in the coming weeks, and he does tell us what we are to do leading up to those days when He'll come again, we'll see that answered in the questions below. But do not be deceived by global warming, polar ice, the bird flu, etc - don't watch for those signs watch for the ones Christ tells, things that man cannot discern, those are the key and our actions and responsibilities in the days leading up to his return are clear as well.

4. Well, if our list of things above in question 1 aren't the signs of His coming, but only birth pangs and if no man is to know the hour He is coming then why is there so much in the Bible about His coming again and what are the real signs his return is imminent? (Read the following verses and list beside each a summary of what it tells us.)
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
 - i. ANSWER: Rapture of the Church
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
 - i. ANSWER: The world will be thinking he's never coming and all is well - peace and safety
 - c. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
 - i. ANSWER: A great falling away from the truth, apostasy, the pullout of the Restrainer (the Holy Spirit) and the revealing of Satan.

5. If these are some of the signs of His coming again and they are still future then what are we to do now - how can we prepare for an event when we don't know when it will be, and why is there so much in God's Holy Word about it if we're not to know when?
 - a. 2 Thessalonians 2:15
 - i. ANSWER: Stand Fast
 - b. Peter 1:13-15
 - i. ANSWER: Be Holy in all we do until He returns
 - c. 1 Peter 4:7-19
 - i. ANSWER: Live responsibly, love one another and be about God's work
 - d. 2 Peter 3:1-9
 - i. ANSWER: Don't be fooled just because Christ hasn't returned yet, remember the "Days of Noah"
 - e. 2 Peter 3:10-18
 - i. ANSWER: Stand fast, don't be led away in error
 - f. Revelation 1:3
 - i. ANSWER: Keep these things, hold on for the time is near when you'll need this knowledge.
 - g. Hebrews 10:25
 - i. ANSWER: Meet more often as the day draws closer
 - h. Matthew 24:4-6
 - i. ANSWER: Don't be deceived, the end is not yet.
 - i. Matthew 24:27
 - i. ANSWER: Christ's Second Coming will be obvious to everyone worldwide, you won't miss it, you can't miss it - prior to that event don't be fooled by anyone or anything else.

We begin a grand journey this week as God allows us a look into the future and confirms in doing so that He is very much on the Throne and very much God who sent His only Son to die for us and raised Him up on the third day so that we might also be saved and be adopted into His eternal family. One recurring theme through all of scripture is God wants us to be on watch, to be careful, to be grounded in the truth about those days so that we are not misled now, or in the future. Next week we'll see there's another reason He's written down His words in the book of Revelation.

For this week then we see that all of the "signs" man would point to as the "end of the world" are just that, man's signs and not God's. Don't be fooled. We've had disease, disaster, political corruption, child abuse, behavior of every imaginable thing all before and we'll have it again, but these are not the signs we're looking for – the real signs we've begun to learn this week and will learn in depth in the coming weeks.

We're learning there will come a time when the "Church" will teach lies as truth, when they'll deny the deity of Christ, and a great falling away from sound doctrine will occur. There will also come a time when Satan will be worshipped as the Christ and the Jews hunted down and slaughtered as something "god" ordained. There will come a time when a different Gospel will be preached to the whole world and then the end will come. Are we getting close? Next week God will take us one step closer.

I'm praying He'll richly bless you as you study with us through this powerful study and will draw you closer to Him than ever before. Let us ground ourselves in the Bible and stand firm for His return draws closer with each passing day.

Yours in Christ,

Wes