

**Introduction:**

Clearly, the bible is not clear about how the 'End Times' will happen

- *Jesus said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. Acts 1:6-10*

I. The Basic timeline of the End Times (though there are many variations):

1. Jesus ascends (*Acts 1:6*)
2. Signs appear -- famines, wars, false prophets, and earthquakes. (*Matthew 24*)
3. The Rapture (*Matthew 24:40*)
4. Antichrist (*1 John 2:18*)
5. Tribulation (*2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 9-10*)
6. Jesus and the raptured church return on clouds of glory. (*1 Thessalonians 4:17*)
7. Armageddon (*Revelation 19:11-21*)
8. Millennium -- 1000 years; Satan is bound in hell -- (*Revelation 20:2*)
9. "lake of fire" for eternity. (*Revelation 20:14*)
10. "New Jerusalem" (*Revelation 21:2-3*)

II. Getting Ready (*Luke 12:35-40*)

1. Dress Up
  - *"Be dressed ready for service like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him..."*
2. Light Up
  - *and keep your lamps burning,*
3. Wake Up
  - *you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Luke 12:35-36,40)*

III. What the "End Times" drives us to do...

1. This should drive us to a real sense of urgency.
2. This should drive us to prayer.
3. This should drive us to lighten up this world.
4. This should drive us to hope.
  - *"Don't let your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe in me. I'm going to come back and take you home." (John 14:1-3)*

**Monday** - Matthew's Gospel, chapters 24 and 25 give us our most extensive teachings from Jesus on the End Times. This section begins when Jesus' disciples ask simply: "When will this happen? What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (*Matthew 24:3*) Jesus then recites that famous list of 'signs' – wars & rumors of wars, nation against nation; famines, earthquakes... "all are the beginning of birth pains," to the end of this age and the beginning of a new one. (*Matthew 24:4-21*) These will be terrible times, says the bible, but Jesus warns us against the many false prophets who will arise predicting the return of Christ. (*Matthew 24:22-25*)

**Tuesday** - In this section we study about Jesus portrayal of his return (His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming). Read *Matthew 24:30-32*. Notice that Jesus seemed to predict that those living at the time he spoke would still be alive to witness his return (v. 34). What do you think early Christians thought when the world did not immediately end? Why do you think many Christians seem obsessed to know when it will, even though Jesus says (*Matthew 24:36-44*) that no one can know? What are we supposed to be doing while we wait? (*Matthew 24:45-51*)

**Wednesday** - Today we begin to look at Jesus' parables about the end times. Read *Matthew 25:1-13*. Who are the virgins? Who is the bridegroom? What meaning do you see in 'keeping your lamp burning?' In being prepared and in being the light in the darkness? In the New Testament, the bride imagery is used often of the church and her relationship to Christ. The bride belongs to Christ, who is the Bridegroom (*John 3:29*). In *Revelation 19:7-8*, the church, as the bride of the Lamb, has prepared herself for marriage by performing righteous deeds In *Revelation 21:2-9*, the great wedding is portrayed with the church prepared for her bridegroom. In *2 Corinthians 11:2*, Paul wrote that he had betrothed the Corinthian church to Christ. He wanted to present the church as a pure bride to Christ. The Corinthians were in danger of committing "adultery." The bridal imagery is used to indicate the great love which God has for His people.

**Thursday** - So what do we do while we wait for the return of the bridegroom, Jesus, to get his bride, the church? Read *Luke 12:35-40*. Note to, *2 Peter 3:8-14*. The parable of the talents (*25:14-28*) also warns us against just 'waiting,' but rather we are to wise stewards of God's kingdom. How are you using your talents for Christ? Sign up for class 301 to learn how to use them for the Kingdom!

**Friday** - The last part of Matthew is perhaps one of the most famous parables in the bible...the sheep and goats. Remember that great question the angels asked Jesus' followers in *Acts 1:6-10*? "Its not for you to know the times or dates ... why are you standing there looking into the sky?" I think too many in the church today stand around looking into the sky for the spiritual knowledge of Jesus, instead of looking around them at the hurts of the world – the very world into which Jesus came to minister! We are the 'risen body' of Christ today, so instead of 'watching intently' for him to return, we are to be doing his work in the world today while we wait for his return! Read Jesus own words and how severe they are considering what he expects of us. *Matthew 25:31-46*.