

# **A FIRM FOUNDATION FOR TROUBLED TIMES**

## **PART ONE: WHAT IS HAPPENING?**

### INTRODUCTION

September 9,10 ..... Who do you worship?  
September 16,17 .....What if things get worse?  
September 23,24 ..... Do people make God angry?  
September 30, October 1 .....What if I'm falsely accused?  
October 7,8 .. ..... If I hear from God, will people believe me?  
October 14,15..... What events does God say are coming?  
October 21,22 .....What did Jesus teach about the end of the age?

## **PART TWO: WHAT DO I DO ABOUT IT?**

October 28, 29 ..... Study the Word and Pray  
November 4,5..... Guard your worship  
November 11,12 .....Carefully guard friendships  
November 18,19 ..... Learn the ways of the enemy  
November 25,26 ..... Watch the signs of the times

**The news can be frightening, and our world seems chaotic, almost out of control! But there is a peace that the believer can have in the midst of it all. This peace begins with a relationship with God and builds as intimacy with God develops. Such peace and intimacy isn't accidental; it only happens when a believer intentionally chooses to pursue God. In this application class, we will explore scriptures that help us find intimacy with God, live for Him in a sinful world, respond appropriately to a troubled culture, and find peace in the midst of the confusion. Together, we will intentionally pursue God, a firm foundation in troubled times.**

# INTRODUCTION

The year was 1940. The moment was one of the darkest in the history of the English people. More than 300,000 British troops suddenly found themselves pinned down in northern France. Nazi forces were bearing down on them. The British didn't have enough ammunition or supplies. At any moment, Hitler's forces would launch a ferocious attack. The Brits faced imminent annihilation. Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his advisors thought at best the navy could rescue 20,000 to 30,000 before it was too late. Others feared even that might not be possible. And the stakes couldn't have been higher. If so many forces were wiped out, Hitler and the Nazis would invade the British Isles – and win.

So the King of England called for a national day of prayer. That Sunday, an estimated 70 percent of the British people showed up at churches all over the country. They begged for the Lord's mercy on their fathers and sons, and for their national survival. And the Lord heard those heartfelt prayers and responded with what became known as "the miracle at Dunkirk." Hitler inexplicably delayed giving his generals the order to finish off the Brits. A great storm over Germany prevented Nazi planes from being able to take off. The British people quickly assembled some 900 fishing boats, yachts, trawlers, and other private and government vessels, and began ferrying the troops off the French beaches and back to England a few at a time. By the grace of God, nearly a third of a million souls were saved as a result, as was the British nation.

As we look at our nation today, it is becoming more and more clear that we need a “miracle at Dunkirk” for the United States. The problem of course, is that today prayer and fasting is treated as ridiculous, even treated with disdain by the media.

As we begin our study for today, read 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 and answer the following questions:

1. Who is supposed to take action? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What are those people supposed to do?
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, continue our introductory reading in 1 Corinthians 14:30-33 \_\_\_\_\_

Do a word study on "confusion" in the above passage. \_\_\_\_\_

If confusion doesn't come from God, then where does it come from? It is interesting to note that in New Testament terms, the opposite of peace isn't war, it is chaos or confusion.

Continue your reading in James 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus himself addressed the times we live in. Read Luke 21:8-9 and journal what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

Continue your reading in Judges 17:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

Today, as in Micah's day, everyone seems to put his or her own interests first. Time has not changed human nature. Most people still reject God's right way of living. The people in Micah's time replaced the true worship of God with a homemade version of worship. As a result, justice was soon replaced by revenge and chaos. Ignoring God's direction led to confusion and destruction. Anyone who has not submitted to God will end up doing whatever seems right at the time. This tendency is present in all of us.

As we finish our study for this introductory lesson, read the following from one of the biblical poetry books:

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,  
But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.

Proverbs 21:2

Every man's way is right in his own eyes,  
But the Lord weighs the hearts.

Proverbs 26:5

Answer a fool as his folly deserves,  
That he not be wise in his own eyes.

Proverbs 26:12

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?  
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 26:16

The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes  
Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.

Proverbs 28:11

The rich man is wise in his own eyes,  
But the poor who has understanding sees through him.

Proverbs 30:12

There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes,  
Yet is not washed from his filthiness.

## WHO DO YOU WORSHIP?

If you want to stay on track, you have to be very careful about what/who you worship. Of course, we say that we worship only God. But is this really true?

Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13 both record an important perspective. Read these verses and journal what you learn here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now do a study on the word translated "wealth" or "mammon" and write the results here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The interesting part of this word is that it has associated with it a personification. In other words, the wealth has taken on an identity that is almost humanlike. We might translate "wealth personified" or "wealth deified." What Jesus is really saying is that we can't be worshiping God and the world's stuff at the same time. It will lead us nowhere good. If we want to stay anchored, we must carefully guard our worship.

Do a word study on "worship" and write what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is such an important concept, that Jesus said some amazing things about it. Read Luke 14:26-30 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 1 is basically a treatise on what happens when worship is perverted. Sometimes we worry about what people might think about us if we are overtly worshipful. This is especially true in our current culture. Read Romans 1:16 and write your thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Add Jesus' words in Matthew 10:32-33 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Read Romans 1:18-25 and answer the following questions:

1. Who is being addressed? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the difference between lack of truth and suppressing truth? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What did they do with the glory of God? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What did they do with the truth of God? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Complete your reading for today in Matthew 16:24-27. Read very carefully. As you read, do a word study on "soul" in these verses. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT IF THINGS GET WORSE?

We have had a look at the worship of a believer. But, the real question is, "will you still worship God when things get bad? When things get even worse?"

Throughout scripture, God has included stories of people who had to ask these same questions. Today, we will focus our attention on one of them. He is an amazing man, a prophet, named Habakkuk. He was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah after the fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria.

Little is known of the prophet Habakkuk. There is a tradition that links him to the son of the Shunamite woman. This is 2 Kings 4:16 because of Elisha's words to the woman in 2 Kings 4:16. Read this section and do a word study on "embrace," recording the results here: \_\_\_\_\_

---

This identification, however, is extremely unlikely, since the Shunamite woman's son would have been born about 100 years earlier. Habakkuk is identified as a prophet in Habakkuk. 1:1. Since this identification is seldom made, some interpreters take it as an indication that Habakkuk was a professional prophet, who made his living as a prophet of the temple or royal court. Many of these prophets were false and were strongly denounced by Jeremiah.

Read Jeremiah 26:1-29:32 for more information: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Whether or not Habakkuk is of this group, it is clear that he truly spoke for God. A majority of scholars date Habakkuk to the period between 626 and 605 B.C. Others believe it can be more precisely dated to after 612 BC, the date of the fall of Nineveh, and no later than 605.

Nineveh had briefly repented under the ministry of the prophet Jonah. Do some research on Nineveh, looking at their chief God. Then discuss why Jonah might have been credible to the Ninevites: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Since Habakkuk's prophecy deals with the Babylonians, who were a rising menace during this period, these dates are likely. Habakkuk is told of God's plan to use Babylon to bring judgment against his people in Judah. Habakkuk is, frankly, astounded.

The first section of the book, two complaints are made by Habakkuk, and God's replies to the prophet are recorded. Read and record the first complaint in

Habakkuk 1:1-4: \_\_\_\_\_

---



Habakkuk expresses dismay that God has not judged the sin of Israel. God replies, indicating that he is rousing the Babylonians to punish Israel's sin. The description of Israel's judgment by Babylon brings on Habakkuk's second complaint. Read Habakkuk. 1:12-17 and record the second complaint here:

---

---

Habakkuk may well be in the same situation in which we find ourselves. While he recognized the need for Israel's punishment, he struggled with God's allowing Judah to suffer at the hand of wicked pagans. God responds to this second complaint by confirming his judgment through Babylon. But he also promises that despite Israel's terrible punishment, a righteous remnant would survive, and in the end Babylon, too, would fall.

The next section, Habakkuk 2:6-20, contains a song of derision or taunt song against Babylon, promising her sure demise.

Read through this song and record the five woes that enumerate Babylon's sins and the judgment God will bring:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

The final section of the book, Habakkuk 3:1-19, brings resolution to Habakkuk's complaints. The prophet sings a prayer to the Lord which culminates with a declaration that he will rejoice in Yahweh no matter what circumstances he and his people might face.

As you complete your reading for this session, read through Habakkuk 3:17-19 and write what you learn about Habakkuk's personal response in view of the

troubled times that are coming: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

What if you knew that things in our world might get much worse? If you read prophecy, you will probably come to that conclusion! Are you able to have the same response that Habakkuk had? Honestly journal your thoughts here:

---

---

---

---

---

---

## DO PEOPLE MAKE GOD ANGRY?

As we were working through our section on worship, one sentence probably stood out to you, as it did to me.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...

Do a word study on "wrath" and write the results here: \_\_\_\_\_

God's wrath is hard to believe. For some, the idea of a wrathful God is a roadblock to faith. Others, who have experienced the transforming grace and love of God in their lives, find the idea of God's wrath contradictory to their experience of God. Can we believe that the God whose unconditional love is revealed in Romans 5:8 is at the same time a God of wrath? Read Romans 5:8 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

First we need to discuss the biblical use of anthropomorphisms, the use of analogies from human experience to describe God. The Bible speaks about God's nature, work and purposes in terms analogous to what we know and experience as human beings. This is by necessity. God's absolute nature is not known completely to finite creatures. We can only approximate what God is like by comparing him to us.

Traditionally theological language using anthropomorphisms has been recognized, but it also has its limitations. So, while knowledge and power are aspects of human experience, God is said to possess these in an absolute, infinite sense: he is *omniscient* (all-knowing) and *omnipotent* (all-powerful).

Generally, those aspects of human nature and experience which we have identified as the highest and the best have been ascribed to God. We see God as the one who is or possesses truth, grace, beauty, love, righteousness, and faithfulness in their most complete or absolute forms. But a corollary of this way of speaking about God is the resistance to ascribe to God human attributes or feelings, which we perceive as negative: hate, anger, a vindictive spirit, ugliness and so forth. Wrath is clearly one of these.

There is some biblical warrant for this resistance. For example, in Hosea 11, the reason for God's refusal to give up on Israel—though it clearly deserved destruction on the basis of human standards of justice—is the fact that "I am God and not man" (Hosea 11:9).

However, the major reason for our difficulty in accepting such negative human attributes for God is a human concept of God, born from philosophical speculation. The Bible does not have such a view of God. The God of the Bible enters into relationship with his creation in Jesus of Nazareth, in whom "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." Even so, there are other aspects of Jesus to be considered. Read Hebrews 2:17: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The Bible takes the relationship between Creator and creation very seriously. Because the creation is God's, it is responsible to God. Within such a relationship of accountability, romantic, idealistic, sentimental concepts of God are out of place. It is in opposition to this larger background that the concept of God's wrath must be understood.

It is instructive that Paul speaks of the revelation of God's wrath within the context of a theology of creation. The biblical story of creation and alienation contained in the opening chapters of Genesis clearly forms the backdrop of Romans 1:18-23. Romans 1:21-22 especially is a poignant reminder of the refusal of humankind (Adam) to live as creature in relationship with God and instead to grasp for likeness with God.

Paul speaks of the wrath of God in two ways. Mostly, the expression refers to a future event in which God's judgment is executed on the world's sinfulness. Read the following verses and record the examples:

Romans 2:5, 8 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 5:9 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 5:6 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Thessalonians 1:10 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Thessalonians 5:9 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In these contexts, God's wrath (or its synonym, God's judgment) is clearly perceived as an activity of God, his decided action against sin. It is important to note here that wrath is God's personal response to sin, though unlike that of the various divinities of Greco-Roman religions and myths, God's wrath is never capricious, vindictive or malicious.

In Romans 1:18, Paul does not say that God's wrath *will be* revealed at the last day (that is, judgment day) but rather, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven" now. It is not only the divine response to the creation's unfaithfulness in the future judgment; it is already a present reality. This sense of a present manifestation of God's wrath is confirmed in several other passages from Paul. Read these verses and record what you learn:

Romans 3:5 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 4:15 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 9:2 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Thessalonians 2:16 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

But in addition to the present reality, there is coming a future wrath of God. As you complete your reading for today, look through the following verses from Revelation and journal your thoughts:

Revelation 14:10...he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire

and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Revelation 14:19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

Revelation 15:7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

Revelation 16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

Revelation 16:19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

Revelation 19:15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

## WHAT IF I'M FALSELY ACCUSED?

Many people are fearful, in these times, that Christians will begin to be accused falsely. Maybe something similar has already happened to you. The Bible is filled with examples of this happening to God's people.

As you begin your reading today, read through Psalm 27, particularly noting verse 12: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Note exactly what has happened to David. Also, journal what David is expecting God to do here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The most obvious example of someone being falsely accused is in the trial of Jesus and the events leading up to it. As we read through the scriptures, we find that the outcome of the trial was determined before it even started. Although the Law was very specific about witnesses in trials, none of the requirements of the Law were met with regard to the witnesses who testified against Jesus.

1. Even before the trial began, it had been determined that Jesus must die. There was no "innocent until proven guilty" approach. Reread John 11:50 and Mark 14:1 and record what you learn here: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. False witnesses were sought to testify against Jesus. Read Matthew 26:59 and journal your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Usually the religious leaders went through an elaborate system of screening witnesses to ensure justice.

3. No defense for Jesus was sought or allowed . Read Luke 22:67-71 \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. The trial was conducted at night, which was illegal according to the religious leaders' own laws. Read Mark 14:53-65 and Mark 15:1 \_\_\_\_\_

---

5. The high priest put Jesus under oath, but then incriminated him for what he said. Read Matthew 26:63-66 \_\_\_\_\_

---

Cases involving such serious charges were to be tried only in the Sanhedrin's regular meeting place, not in the high priest's palace.  
Read Mark 14:53-65 \_\_\_\_\_

---

The religious leaders were not interested in giving Jesus a fair trial. In their minds, Jesus had to die. This blind obsession led them to pervert the justice they were appointed to protect.

John 15:18-26 is one of the most sobering passages in the Bible. Particularly note verse 25 and write your thoughts in the space provided: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Cross reference to Psalm 69:4 \_\_\_\_\_

---

Also read Psalm 35:19 \_\_\_\_\_

---



## IF I HEAR FROM GOD, WILL PEOPLE BELIEVE ME?

One of the most frustrating things that can happen to a believer is to be very seriously sharing truth with someone else, and having them ignore it. Why don't people want to hear the truth?

Read Jesus' words in John 3:19 \_\_\_\_\_

Paul's conversion was pretty dramatic! Read about it in Acts 26:14-18, particularly noting what commission Paul received from God: \_\_\_\_\_

Helping people turn from darkness to light is not an easy job. Jesus rightly said that people love the darkness because their deeds are evil. Read Isaiah 29:15 \_\_\_\_\_

The quintessential biblical example of someone that heard from God but was rarely believed is found in the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah served as a prophet to Judah from 627 B.C. until the exile in 586 B.C.

Climate of the times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Society was deteriorating economically, politically, spiritually.</li><li>• Wars and captivity.</li><li>• God's word was deemed offensive.</li></ul>
Main message	Repentance from sin would postpone Judah's coming judgment at the hands of Babylon.
Importance of message	Repentance is one of the greatest needs in our immoral world. God's promises to the faithful shine brightly by bringing hope for tomorrow and strength for today.
Contemporary prophets	Habakkuk (612-588) Zephaniah (640-621)

Read Jeremiah's call in Jeremiah 1:1-10 \_\_\_\_\_

The people in Jeremiah's home town reached the point of trying to kill him. Read Jeremiah 11:18-23 \_\_\_\_\_

---

Compare to Matthew 13:57

---

Jeremiah also gives us a good example of what can happen when we have heard from God, but then take our eyes off of Him.

Read Jeremiah 15:17-21:

---

Jeremiah accused God of not helping him when he really needed it. Jeremiah had taken his eyes off God's purposes and was feeling sorry for himself. He was angry, hurt, and afraid. In response, God didn't get angry at Jeremiah; he answered by rearranging Jeremiah's priorities. As God's mouthpiece, he was to influence the people, not let them influence him.

There are three important lessons in this passage:

- (1) in prayer we can reveal our deepest thoughts to God
- (2) God expects us to trust him, no matter what
- (3) we are here to influence others for God

Read Jeremiah 25:2-7

---

Imagine preaching the same message for 23 years and continually being rejected! Jeremiah faced this; but because he had committed his life to God, he continued to proclaim the message: "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices." Regardless of the people's response, Jeremiah did not give up. God never stops loving us, even when we reject him. We can thank God that he won't give up on us, and, like Jeremiah, we can commit ourselves to never forsaking him. No matter how people respond when we tell them about God, we must remain faithful to God's high call and continue to witness for him.

There is a huge price to be paid when we hear from God but refuse to do what He tells us to do. Read 1 Samuel 15:23-26 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Therefore, even if people never listen to us, we have to be faithful to bring the message God has given to us. Read 1 Corinthians 3:6. Now write your thoughts about your part in bringing the message, and God's part in the reception of the message: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

## WHAT EVENTS DOES GOD SAY ARE COMING?

When we look at the world, we begin to wonder if we are living in the last days. God has given some signs of events that will happen as we approach the end times. One of the most important is given in Ezekiel 37. Read this chapter, and record the most obvious event that occurs before the end of the age here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In this section, God gives breath to dry bones. God asked the prophet a remarkable question: Son of man, can these bones live? Was there potential for life in these lifeless frames? Ezekiel knew that humanly speaking it was impossible, so his answer was somewhat guarded. O Sovereign LORD, You alone know. Only God can accomplish such a thing. The reviving of the dry bones signified Israel's national restoration. The vision showed that Israel's new life depended on God's power, not outward circumstances: I will open your graves. I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Also when God restores Israel nationally, He will renew them spiritually.

At this time, Israel has been restored as a nation, but the spiritual restoration has not yet occurred, but it is coming!

Ezekiel describes a war that follows the regathering of Israel. Although Israel has been involved in several wars since 1948 when it once again became a nation, none of them fit the framework given in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Read those two chapters and answer following questions:

How many Gog/Magog wars are there? (be sure to check in Revelation) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Exactly who are Gog and Magog? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I can only give you my own interpretation. Remember that you have your copy of God's Word and you need to look into this for yourself.

When will this prophecy be fulfilled? No past historical events match this prophecy, so it still awaits a future fulfillment. Some think this attack on Israel should be identified with the attack of Gog and Magog at the end of Christ's

millennial reign. (Revelation 20:7-9 – did you find this?) but this identification has several problems

- (1) The results of Ezekiel's battle. Do not coincide with the events that follow the battle in Revelation 20. Why bury the dead for seven months after the battle (Ezekiel 39:12-13) when the next prophetic event is the resurrection of the unsaved dead? (Revelation 20:11-13)
- (2) Why would the people remain on earth after the battle to burn the weapons of war for seven years (Ezekiel 39:9-10) instead of entering immediately into eternity? (Revelation 21:1-4)

The events after each battle are so different that two separate battles must be assumed.

- (3) The effect on the people is different. In Ezekiel the battle is the catalyst God will use to draw Israel to Himself. But the battle in Revelation 20 will occur after Israel has been faithful to her God and has enjoyed His blessings for 1,000 years.

If the battle of Ezekiel 38-39 is not at the end of the Millennium, could it be at the beginning of the Millennium? This also seems extremely doubtful. Read Micah 4:1-4 and answer why this is so: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

It seems best to place Ezekiel's battle of Gog and Magog in the Tribulation period. Other internal markers indicate that it should be placed in the first three and one-half years of the seven-year period. The attack will come when Israel is at peace. Read Ezekiel 38:8, 11 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When Israel's covenant with the Antichrist is in effect at the beginning of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week, Israel will be at peace. But after the covenant is broken at the middle of the seven-year period, the nation will suffer tremendous persecution.

Read Daniel 9: 24-27 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This will provide the time needed to bury the dead. Read Ezekiel 39:9-10 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

So the battle described by Ezekiel may take place sometime during the first three and one-half years of the seven-year period before Christ's second coming. This may possibly be associated with the four horseman of the apocalypse. Read Revelation 6:1-8 \_\_\_\_\_

---

Ezekiel was describing a battle that will involve Israel's remotest neighbors. They will sense their opportunity to attack when Israel feels secure. This may possibly be when Israel is under the false protection of her covenant with the Antichrist sometime at the beginning of the seven-year period.

The nations involved in the attack will include the Russia, Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Libya. There may be other nations involved, because the names given are difficult to interpret.

Read Ezekiel 39:1-6 and write God's dealing with Israel's adversaries: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Continue your reading in Ezekiel 39:7-9 and record the reason: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

If you read the Bible carefully, it becomes apparent that smart people are going to be on God's side. There really isn't another logical choice!

## WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT THE END OF THE AGE?

Today we are going to look at Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24. We will see that what He wrote corresponds with Old Testament prophecy as well as the book of Revelation. Jesus said that this period will be characterized by

- (a) false Christs: Read Matthew 24:4-5 and cross reference to Revelation 6:1-2 particularly noting who is the first seal: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

- (b) wars and rumors of wars: Read Matthew 24:6 and cross reference to Revelation 6:3-4. Note what is represented by the second seal: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

- (c) unusual disturbances in nature including famines: Read Matthew 24:7 and cross reference to Revelation 6:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

The third seal is famine; the fourth and fifth seals are death and martyrdom, as we read in Revelation 6:7-11, and earthquakes.

Cross reference to Revelation 6:12-14 \_\_\_\_\_

---

Jesus said that these things will be the beginning of birth pains. As a pregnant woman's birth pains indicate that her child will soon be born, so these universal conflicts and catastrophes will mean the end the age is near.

Jesus began His discourse with a time word, Then. At the middle point of the seven-year period preceding Christ's second coming, great distress will begin to be experienced by Israel. The Antichrist, who will have risen to power in the

world and will have made a protective treaty with Israel, will break his agreement at that time. Reread the information on this treaty that we looked at last week:

Daniel 9:27 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The antichrist will bring great persecution on Israel and even establish his own center of worship in the temple in Jerusalem. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This will result in the death of many and many people departing from the faith. Believing Jews will be betrayed by nonbelievers, and many will be deceived by rising false prophets. Wickedness will increase, causing the love of most people to grow cold. Those who remain faithful to the Lord until the end of that period of time will be saved, that is, delivered.

Also the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world during this period as a testimony to all nations.

Read Revelation 14:6 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus also spoke of the abomination that causes desolation. This abomination was spoken of by Daniel in Daniel 9:27 and cross referenced in Matthew 24:15. Read these verses to close your study for this section \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## LEARN TO STUDY THE WORD

I am convinced that, when we stand before God, one of the questions for American Christians will be, "why didn't you study the Word more diligently? You had all of the materials and opportunity necessary." We have many excuses for our lack of diligence; but my usual excuse is that there was something I wanted to do more.

Read 2 Timothy 2:15 and record God's position on the use of the word: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Do a word study on "diligent" in the above verse and write the results here: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

To begin your diligent study of the Word, you need a good Bible translation. It is preferable to have one that has study tools keyed to it. When you purchase your Bible, you can ask about the study tools. It is important to get a translation rather than a paraphrase.

It is also important to realize that good translations come in many different formats. You might get the same translation inside a Ryrie study Bible, a Zondervan study Bible, the Life Application Bible, the Inductive Study Bible, etc. Therefore it is important to know who the editor of the Bible is. The actual translation is God's Word. The editor's study notes ARE NOT!

Example: I carry a New American Standard Bible updated version to class each Sunday. It is published by Zondervan. I like the way the Ryrie study Bible, with the same translation, lays out on the page much better. But I do not agree with the text notes in the Ryrie study Bible, so I opted to carry the Zondervan instead.

Example: I carry a New American Standard Bible updated version to class each week. It is published by Zondervan. I like the way the Ryrie study Bible, with the same translation, lays out on the page much better. But I do not agree with the text notes in the Ryrie study Bible, so I opted to carry the Zondervan instead.

It is much more financially feasible to have the other Bible translations you will study from in some sort of computer program or to have access to one of the online services. [net.bible.org](http://net.bible.org), blue letter Bible, and [bible.cc](http://bible.cc) are good online resources. There are many study and academic programs for your computer. I use iExalt software most often, but have others for translations into Greek and Hebrew. Many of these will do your word studies with one click and even pronounce the word in the original language. Some of the more advanced ones will even give you more grammatical information.

In addition to your good Bible translation, you need to have a concordance keyed to your Bible. Obviously, a concordance isn't "exhaustive" if it is for a translation different than the one you have. So, if you have an NIV Bible, make sure you get a concordance keyed to the NIV. If you have an NASB Bible, get a concordance keyed to the NASB. Remember, the original Strong's Concordance is keyed to the King James Version. Most of the software programs will have concordances keyed to at least two of the Bible translations they contain.

In addition to a concordance, you need a good Bible atlas. It is important to know where the places you are studying are located. Again, software programs will have this.

It is also important to get a good Bible dictionary. This will give you background information on your verses and help you fit them into a context. Context rules!

There are four basic steps to Bible study. Don't cut any of them short or you may come up with a wrong application. Remember to be diligent to show yourself approved and accurate!

1. EXEGESIS. This simply means that you are finding out what the passage says. When it was originally written, it meant something. You are in the process of finding out what that was. You begin by finding out what the passage says.
  - a. Begin with prayer asking for God's help in your study
  - b. Read the passage in its context several times until you are familiar with it
  - c. Ask the questions: who, what, when, where, why, how

When your exegesis is completed, you should know the author, the audience, the place written from and to, the conditions of society and culture at that time, the map locations, etc. All of your study tools will help you with this. It isn't a short procedure and can take hours or days to do with diligence.

2. HERMENEUTICS: This means that you are now positioned to ask what the passage means. When it was written under all of the conditions you discovered in your exegesis, it meant something. What was that?

The meaning will relate to the audience, author, location, culture, etc to which it was written or about which it was written.

3. PRINCIPIIZATION: After you have learned what the passage says and what it meant in the time it was written to the audience who received it, you are ready to form one or more permanent principles.

4. APPLICATION: The permanent principles are what will apply to us.

Some teachers and schools will call the above four-step process "inductive study." If you understand that inductive study includes all of the above steps, then, by all means, use the term! But never short-circuit all of the steps.

1 Timothy 6:20,21 are my ministry key verses. (notice my e-mail address?) It speaks of the need to guard what has been entrusted to you. There are several Greek words that are translated "guard" in English. Do a word study on "guard" in those verses and record what you learn:

---

---

---

As we end for today, spend some time thinking through the commitment God expects us to make regarding the priority of the Word. Record your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

## FAITHFULLY PRAY

There are probably more "how-to" books on prayer than on any other Bible subject. When studying prayer, I really prefer to look at people who are praying. So, today we are going to look at some of the most beautiful passages in scripture, passages on prayer from the book of Psalms. In these verses we find less of the "please, God, give me..." and more of the acknowledgement of who God is. We find less of the "I want" and more of the "You can." As you read through the passages for today, journal the lessons you are learning:

Psalms of praise to God:

Psalm 100 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 113 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 117 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms of group thanksgiving to God:

Psalm 67 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 75 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 136 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms of personal thanksgiving to God:

Psalm 18 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 30 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 32 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms of group request:

Psalm 79 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 80 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 123 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms of individual request:

Psalm 3 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 55 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 86 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms of group sorrow:

Psalm 44 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 74 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 137 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms of personal sorrow:

Psalm 5 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 6 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 120 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms expressing anger:

Psalm 35 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 109 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 140 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms concerning confession:

Psalm 6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 32 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 51 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalms concerning faith:

Psalm 11 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 16 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 23 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## GUARD YOUR WORSHIP

People's feelings about what takes place in church services vary greatly. Some regard such corporate worship as primarily a duty; others as a delight. For some it is chiefly a matter of feeling inspired by or intimately connected to God, for others of being instructed or motivated to action. An increasing number of people today find traditional church services boring and irrelevant

Some find new styles of charismatic or contemporary worship appealing and uplifting. Disputes about appropriate and inappropriate styles of worship have divided many congregations, generally along age lines or according to different views of the Holy Spirit. Surveys of congregations across a wide denominational spectrum, such as those conducted by the Search Institute in Minneapolis in the 1960's, found that corporate worship is generally regarded as an oasis or refuge from every day demands, rather than as an experience for equipping members to integrate faith and everyday life. This is why even many committed believers find churchgoing disappointing and unempowering. Perhaps part of the problem is that our definition of worship is too narrow.

Worship is something anyone can do, anyplace and anytime. So we find words associated with worship are also used of people's service to society. Believers are encouraged to serve Christ and to please God in every setting:

1. Daily work: Colossians 3:22-24 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Family life and marriage: Colossians 3:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 5:21 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Caring for the needy: Matthew 25:45 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Providing hospitality: Hebrews 13:2 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



5. Acting justly and compassionately: James 1:27 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual worship involves nothing less than offering up our whole lives to God so that all we do is in conformity with God's character and standards rather than with the attitudes and values of the world. Read Romans 12:1-2 and apply it to this concept of worship: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This means that we do not move in and out of worshiping God when we go to church on Sundays, but are always worshiping God whether we are doing it well or badly, consciously or unconsciously.

The only thing that distinguishes our coming together in church is that when we do so, we are worshiping God together as a body of God's people, whereas most of the time we are worshiping God on our own or with our families and friends. When we do meet together, it is, not only our singing together that is worship, but everything that we do—greeting one another as we arrive, learning from the Scriptures, sharing news or announcements, singing praises, praying, sharing the Lord's Supper, or visiting over coffee. (after, not during the Christian Education hour!)

For the early Christians having a common meal together was a regular part of their weekly corporate worship. We are encouraged "speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." Read the following verses and journal what you learn here:

Ephesians 5:19 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 10:24-25 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 19 tells us that creation declares the glory of God -- unintentionally just by being itself. But human beings uniquely can and must choose to bless God.

We bless God by transforming all aspects of everyday life into a spiritual ministry to others, living according to God's priorities and values, and all for God's benefit and blessing. This means that we are also worshiping God when we are seeking to bring benefit to others, often so concentrating on this that we are not intentionally focusing on God at all. It is precisely when we are giving ourselves away to whatever calling, ministry, opportunity or need God has given us, that we are reproducing that total commitment to others exemplified in Christ.

In the last book of the Bible we are given an empowering vision of worship in the New Jerusalem. All earthly worship should be inspired by the worship that is already going on in heaven and that we will experience more fully when Christ comes again. Far from being dull and stereotypical (I guess you might have a harp) worship in heaven is exquisitely beautiful, continuously spontaneous and totally enjoyable. The picture given to us in Revelation 21-22 has several characteristics that can inspire our worship now. Read through those chapters and record what you learn about this worship as we close this session: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CAREFULLY GUARD FRIENDSHIPS

The devil is a specialist in destroying friendships...and in keeping them from developing in the first place. Christians speak of friendship which leads to the conclusion that it is widely experienced. We have friendly churches, user-friendly publications and software, and friendship evangelism. Yet behind the rhetoric is a deep craving for what is seldom experienced—intimate, lifelong relationships in which persons are enjoyed simply for who they are and not what they can do for us. Ironically, people who boast of “my friends” may be among the most lonely as they are encircled by acquaintances, business colleagues or others linked by obligations and benefits through an unwritten contract of the mutual meeting of needs. Friendship, in contrast, is not *for* anything except the friend, and therefore as a nonutilitarian relationship, friendship takes us to the center of Christian living.

Today we are going to consider one of the most amazing friendships recorded in scripture, and coincidentally featuring one of my favorite biblical characters: Jonathan. Read the following verses and write your thoughts on the development of that friendship here:

1 Samuel 18:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Samuel 19:1-7 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Samuel 20 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 Samuel 23:16-18 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Samuel 1:17-27 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Samuel 9:1-12 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jonathan's friendship with David was risky because of Saul's hatred toward David. Jonathan's friendship with David was selfless. Even though Jonathan could have reasonably expected that, as the son of the king, he would be the next king, he acknowledged that God had anointed David to be the next king and not him.

The most amazing part of the friendship is recorded in 1 Samuel 20:42. Record what that was: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

After Jonathan's death, David's mourning was heartfelt. And David continued to honor the covenant of friendship, even after the death of Jonathan. How did David do this? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A reflection on friendship is found in Ecclesiastes 4:7-12. Read those verses and record the benefits of friendship here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The Bible puts human friendship into the context of the relational life within God. Read John 17:21, 23, 26 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The gospel is the mechanism through which God makes friends out of his enemies. Friendship between God and humans is the ultimate goal of God's grace, as modeled by Moses with whom God spoke on Sinai. Read Exodus 33:11 and journal what you learn about that relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Abraham is described as the friend of God. Read Isaiah 41:8 and James 2:23 \_\_\_\_

---

---

---

Job hungered for God's friendship more than he desired relief from his suffering: "Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house" (Job 29:4). Satan's question addressed the heart of Job's friendship with God. Read Job 1:9 and record the question here: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Friendship, even friendship with God, is not *for* anything. It has no utilitarian value. That is, our relationship to God should not be a commercial relationship in which we exchange piety for spiritual, even eternal, benefits.

In the Gospel of John Jesus said, "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). But ordinary friendship is not an adequate metaphor for friendship with Jesus, because the latter involves obedience to Jesus' commands. Read John 15:14 \_\_\_\_\_

---

Friendship with Jesus is inseparable from the truth about Jesus, for Jesus himself is truth. So it is more than mere sentimentality: to disobey his commands is to deny his friendship.

The book of Proverbs has much to say about a friend. As you close your reading for this session, read through the following and journal the sort of friend you are to others:

Proverbs 11:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 17:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 25:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 27:6 \_\_\_\_\_

## LEARN THE WAYS OF THE ENEMY

As we read through scripture, looking at the enemy, it becomes apparent that Satan has two primary goals.

1. Prevent people from coming to knowledge and relationship with Jesus (keep them from being saved)
2. Prevent people who are saved from maturing in the faith and becoming useful to the Kingdom of Heaven

In Revelation, we read a lot about overcoming. What are we to overcome? We might summarize in two ways:

- |              |                               |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. the world | 1. The lust of the eyes       |
| 2. the flesh | 2. The lust of the flesh      |
| 3. the devil | 3. The boastful pride of life |

We might say that the grouping on the left represents the various tempters. We might say that the grouping on the right represents the methodology that might be used by those tempters.

Read 1 John 2:16 and journal your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Compare to Genesis 3:6 and note the similarities: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Now, read John 16:33 and write what you learn about overcoming: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Do a word study on overcome and write what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Revelation chapters 2 and 3 record the seven things that are given to people who overcome.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

Reading through that section really makes me want to be an overcomer! But, how do we do this?

Ephesians 6 is the quintessential information in scripture concerning spiritual warfare. Read carefully through Ephesians 6:10-23. Now, use your Bible study skills to determine why Paul might have written this to the church at Ephesus. Record your findings here: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

Look back through the friendship section on Jonathan's covenant relationship with David and note why we might be given armor and weaponry: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

List the defensive armor from Ephesians 6 here: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

Now list the offensive weaponry here: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

How important do you think it is to know the word? \_\_\_\_\_

---

Do a word study on "word" from Ephesians 6:17 and write what you learn here:

---

---

In light of this, how will we be using the Word? \_\_\_\_\_

---

As we close for today, read through the temptation of Jesus by Satan recorded in Matthew 4. Note carefully each time that Jesus answered the devil. Exactly what did He do? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

If we want to successfully battle the enemy, we must know what to do and equip ourselves to do it.



## WATCH THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

In order to adequately observe the signs of the times, one must first have a biblical worldview. In these troubled times, only 25% of Americans say that they have a Christian worldview. And when asked, only 1 in 42 could actually articulate that worldview or give any details about how they came to formulate that worldview. In a time when we need to be carefully watching events, we lack people who are positioned and equipped to do it.

Read 1 Chronicles 12:32 \_\_\_\_\_

---

Harry Blamires, in his book *The Christian Mind*, discusses the elements of a worldview. He believes that a Christian worldview must minimally contain :

1. a careful understanding of our orientation to the supernatural
2. a rational awareness of good and evil
3. an understanding of the role of biblical authority
4. a thoughtful approach to our concern for other people
5. an accurate conception of truth

Of these, perhaps #1 and #5 control the other three. We must understand who God is and our relationship to Him. We must also have an accurate understanding of absolute moral truth.

We looked at the strategy of the enemy in a previous session. But we must really understand that we really are engaged in a war to distort truth.

Read 1 Timothy 6:12 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Once we declare our side—good or evil—heaven or hell—Christ or the devil—then the battle is on. Once we stand for truth, we are automatically in the war. Although we know that God and His people are ultimately victorious, this doesn't mean that there aren't casualties on the road to victory. Military strategy has some basic training that all good soldiers learn:

1. You have to know that there is a war and that a battle within the war is coming

2. You have to be psychologically and emotionally prepared to fight the battle (in the case of a Christian, spiritual preparation is also a part of this)
3. You have to be equipped with the resources to fight the battle in a way that enables you to win

Here are some of the basics of the battle that we are fighting. We are in a war and there is a battle that has purposed to:

- A. Make people believe there is no grand purpose for life. The cultural worldview of our country says that we live to achieve comfortable survival. Success is defined as absence of pain, absence of sacrifice, and experiencing happiness, primarily through accumulating a lot of stuff (or money)
- B. Make people believe there is no value in focusing on or preparing for the future. Each person should live in and for the moment
- C. There are no absolutes. All spiritual and moral principles are relative to the situation and the individual.
- D. There is no omnipotent, omniscient deity who guides reality. We have to lean on the circumstances in which truth is presented and the relative situation. Then we lean on our own knowledge and ability to research to determine what is reality.

I encourage you over the holiday break, to consciously formulate your worldview. Here are some verses to guide you:

Genesis 1-3: the account of the creation and fall

Genesis 12:1-3: the purpose of God's blessings

Exodus 20:1-16: God's value system

Deuteronomy 6:5: God's purpose for my life

Proverbs 29:18: the significance of God's vision for my life

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: what matters most

Isaiah 53: the coming of Christ foretold

Micah 6:8: what God expects from me

Matthew 5-7: the fundamental principles of Christianity

Matthew 18:15-18: how to disagree

Matthew 20:20-28: leadership and servanthood

Matthew 22:34-40: what matters most

Matthew 28:19: the importance of sharing my faith

John 17:14-19: in but not of the world; don't sell out

Acts 2: what the church looks like in action

Romans 8: salvation, the Spirit, and perseverance

Romans 13:1-7: submission and authority

1 Corinthians 5:9 – 6:11: church discipline

1 Corinthians 9:19-23: ministry in context

1 Corinthians 12: understanding spiritual gifts

2 Corinthians 11:22-23: possibility of persecution; importance of passion

Galatians 5:17-25: works of the flesh vs fruit of the Spirit

Ephesians 5:22 – 6:4: life in the family

Ephesians 6:10-20: existence and nature of spiritual warfare

1 Thessalonians 5:15-22: Exhortations for holy living

1 Timothy 3: qualifications for spiritual leaders

Hebrews 11: the nature of faith

James 1:21-27; 2:14-18: balance between faith and deeds

After you have carefully worked through all of the scriptures, it is time to have some personal reflection on the past year. The New Year provides a good opportunity since many newsworthy things are recounted. Look at the events of the world in light of the worldview you have just formulated. Take some time to

reflect and pray, fixing them within the framework of prophecy, or their importance to God's plan and purpose. Journal your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]