



Day 1 — Today's Theme: Future Minded

You wonder what life will be like in the future. You want to know what you will do for a job, if you will marry and if so, who you will marry and where you will live. God knows all about your future. He knows what your occupation will be, whether or not you will marry and to whom, and where you will live. Psalm 139:16 says, *“all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*

We are also curious as to how the world will end. God tells us in the Bible what will happen in the end times. This is called eschatology (es-ka-tology). Eschatology is the study of what the Bible says is going to happen in the end times.¹

Why should we concern ourselves with studying eschatology? Because studying the end times helps us know God on a deeper level. It helps us know that God is sovereign and in control of everything, including the future. Eschatology affirms the justice of God when He will judge every sin and evil that is not covered by the blood of Jesus. God will bring about His final redemption for creation and those of us who know Jesus as our Savior and Lord! Studying end times will give a burden to share Jesus with those in our lives who don't know Him so that they can be spared from God's coming judgment and wrath. And learning about God's punishment for sin should drive us to live holy and godly lives. Second Peter 3:11-13 says, *“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”*

Open It

1. **What do you picture your life to be like in 10 years from now?**

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Eschatology.html>

Day 2 — Today's Theme: Understanding Some Key Terms

2. Share how some books, movies or TV series have portrayed end times.

3. What have you learned or heard about what God says will happen in the end times?

The book of Daniel is full of future prophecies that are challenging to understand. Not all scholars and believers agree on the meaning and application of these end-time prophecies. There are key end-time words that are helpful to know that Christians discuss and debate.

Millennium — 1000-year reign of Christ. Will Jesus literally and physically reign on the earth for 1000 years?

Rapture — This is where Jesus has all believers who have died and are still alive meet Him in the air. When will believers meet Jesus in the air? Will Christians meet Jesus in the air while those who don't know Jesus are left behind?

Tribulation — Tribulation is the pouring out of God's wrath on the earth in judgment of sin. When will this occur? Will believers go through the tribulation, or will they be raptured (taken out of the earth) before the tribulation?

Antichrist — The Antichrist is a world ruler who leads people astray and opposes Jesus. Who will be the Antichrist?

Israel — The role of the nation of Israel: does God have a specific plan for the nation of Israel or is Israel synonymous with the Church?

4. Which term(s) above are new to you? Are there any terms that you don't understand?

5. What questions do you have about the end times that you hope to get answered?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: We're All at Different Places

Everyone approaches the end times differently. Below are a diverse group of friends who all look at the end times from a different perspective.²

Who-Cares Wilma: Wilma is young and just a teenager. She has her whole life ahead of her and isn't really concerned about Jesus returning. She is focused on the here and now.

Disbelieving Darla: We have been here for 2000 years since Jesus' resurrection, and yes, things in the world seem to be getting worse, but she is not sure that Jesus' return will be in her lifetime.

Scared Scarlett: Deeply devoted but anxious about the future depicted in various media, especially the short clips she sees on TikTok and YouTube. Scarlett is afraid of what is going to happen in the future. Will she have to go through all of the horrible events recorded in the Bible? Will she be left behind?

Newspaper Ned: Approaching Bible prophecy like a complex puzzle, Ned seeks to predict events but often misinterprets them, linking the Antichrist to opposing political figures.

Political Polly: Following Ned's lead, Polly uses end-times prophecy to shape political decisions, often overlooking human value in this pursuit.

Confident Carl: Anchored in Scripture, Carl recognizes the danger of fixating on the future. He emphasizes the importance of living faithfully in the present, believing that a deepened relationship with Jesus outweighs the obsession with foreseeing future events. Carl's perspective echoes the wisdom of James Edward, suggesting that our focus as believers shouldn't solely be on predicting the future but on faithfully living out our beliefs, especially in challenging times.

6. Which of the characters seems to resonate most with you? Why did you pick that character? Do you see any students or adults reflected in the other descriptions above? If so, which ones?

7. How should you engage with others who approach the subject of end times differently than you do?

² These and the following study notes come from a sermon preached on Feb 28, 2016, by Tim Badal, *Setting The Stage For The End Times*: www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove/resources/sermons/setting-the-stage-for-the-end-times--part-8/

Day 4 — Today's Theme: What are the Differing End Time Views?

Idealist view: Regards prophetic writings as symbolic, representing broader concepts of good and evil. They emphasize that the book symbolizes the victory of good over evil and encourages righteous living. Notable adherents include Augustine and Karl Barth.

Preterist view: Interprets prophetic writings like some of the book of Daniel and Revelation as events that already occurred in the first century. They see the prophecies fulfilled in events like the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jesus' statement about "this generation" refers to the generation to whom He spoke. Advocates include R. C. Sproul and N. T. Wright.

Historist view: Sees biblical prophecies like those found in Daniel as unfolding throughout human history, from Jesus' ascension to His second coming. Specific events aren't precisely pinpointed, but they believe these events will occur over time before Christ's return. Advocates include notable figures like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley and is the prominent view of historical Christianity.

Futurist view: Believes that the events in Revelation and certain passages like 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 and others in Daniel are yet to occur in the future. This view gained traction again in the past century or so and is prevalent in evangelicalism today. This view could be broken into two other camps:

Dispensational: Within the Dispensational Futurist view, there's a significant emphasis on the role of Israel in biblical prophecy. It anticipates a restoration and central role for Israel in the end times, interpreting certain passages in Revelation and other prophetic books as specifically pertaining to the nation of Israel's future, including the reestablishment of its prominence and significance in God's plan. This is the newest of approaches to Eschatology and became prominent through the ministry of John Darby and C. I. Scofield. Adherents include Tim LaHaye, Hal Lindsey, Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, Tony Evans, and Chuck Swindoll. Several well-known Christian organizations also promote it including Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary.

Non-Dispensational: (VBC Teaching Position) The Non-Dispensational Futurist view, also known as the **Historic Premillennialist view**, shares similarities with the Dispensational Futurist perspective but differs in its approach to interpreting biblical prophecy. Unlike the Dispensationalists, they don't divide history into distinct dispensations. Instead, they believe in a future fulfillment of end-time events, often foreseeing a period of tribulation followed by Christ's literal reign on Earth for a thousand years (the Millennium), but without the detailed timeline or specific emphasis on Israel as seen in the Dispensationalist interpretation. They focus more on the general sequence of events without the intricate divisions of dispensations. Adherents include early church fathers like Polycarp and Justin Martyr. Modern adherents include George Eldon Ladd, Charles Spurgeon, John Piper, Albert Mohler, Francis Schaeffer, D.A. Carson, and Bryan Chapell.

8. Which view, if any, are you most acquainted with? Where did you learn about this view?

9. With such differing end-times views, how can we as Christians still be unified as a body of believers?

10. With so many different views on eschatology, it seems like we don't really know for sure how things will pan out. Why is it still important to study these passages and topics even when there's uncertainty?

Day 5 — Today's Theme: Looking at What Jesus Says About the End Times

Read Mark 13 following along with the brief descriptions of the verses below.

Mark 13:1–2 describes events that happened in the 1st century when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans.

Mark 13:–8 describes the ebb and flow of history from 70 AD until today.

11. What events describe the beginning of birth pains?

Mark 13:9–13 talks about the personal experience or end-time living for Christians. Some Christians are treated poorly by their families because they follow Jesus. “There are stories upon stories of Muslim converts in the Middle East whose children are turning their parents in because they bowed their knee to Jesus. And the next thing the parents see is their children in the hands of Islamic terrorists, putting them to death. This is what’s going to happen. It will be the personal experience of Christians living in the last days.”

Mark 13:14 The abomination that causes desolation

Notice what seems to be a personification of evil: “But when you see the abomination of desolation standing...” How can something stand? It’s got to be a person. “...where he...”—notice the personal pronoun—“ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” Jesus says someone is going to come, and in the moment when he comes, it’s going to be ugly. You’d better start running away from this guy. He’s not going to bring peace and joy. He’s going to bring terror in his wake—the personification of evil.

Mark 13:15–23 describes a period of great emergency

Mark 13:24–31: When things are at their worst, the Son of Man will be coming in the clouds with great power and glory when He will send out the angels to gather the elect from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heaven.

Mark 13:32–37: We don’t know the precise moment of Jesus’ return, so we need to always be watching, ready, and attentive to His coming.

12. Do you see any of the events of Mark 13 happening today?

Day 6 — Today's Theme: How Should We Live in Light of Jesus' Coming Back?

Many people want to know the times, dates, and signs surrounding Jesus' return. However, the Bible calls us not to focus on those details as much as living a life of holiness, purity, and readiness. The passages below emphasize holy living! Read each passage below and underline in each verse what God calls us to do in light of Jesus' return!

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 (ESV): "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it."

1 Peter 1:13–16 (ESV): "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

1 John 3:2–3 (ESV): "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

Titus 2:11–14 (ESV): "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

13. How should God's call to live holy lives in light of Jesus' coming back at any moment affect your daily choices, behaviors, and relationships?

14. What steps can we take individually and as a small group to live more holy lives as we wait for Jesus to return?