

#1 Last Days, End Times Intro 2-13-22

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We're going to study Prophecy and the End Times but we'll begin with some background and doctrinal truth while moving further into our understanding of the Rapture and everything else included into what God's Word has told us to expect and to understand regarding the End Times: our time! This is the time the prophets longed to see; this is the time during which even Paul believed he was living. Paul firmly believed that the Rapture could happen at any moment, and that is what he taught to every believer to whom he spoke and those to whom he wrote. And now, finally, his words, the Holy Spirit's words are falling into place and happening now as we watch the news, as we read the news and especially as we study His Word; we are that last generation; we are the Bride for whom the Lord Jesus Christ will soon leave His Father's House where He has been preparing a special place for each and every one of us whom the Father chose and elected for Himself before He laid the foundations of the World. We are the Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ; we are the love gift from the Father to His Holy and Faithful Son, and we will rule and reign forever and ever with the Lord and King of the Universe, Lord and King Jesus Christ, the One Who loved us and laid down His life as a ransom and payment for our sin that we might become, forever, the Righteousness of God; 'For He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' 2 Corinthians 5:21

But before we begin, we must lay a little groundwork. Before we can rightly divide and understand God's Word, we must, first understand what God has done, what He is doing and what He will do very soon.

Until we begin to understand God's work and purpose, we'll never fully grasp His plans for this time, our time, the End Times.

By most counts, the Bible is about 27% predictive, that is, prophecy... almost a third! There are about 2500 prophecies in the Bible with about 2000 having already been fulfilled to the letter! Prophecy and Creation, itself, is what absolutely proves the truth of God's Word and the absolute proof of God, Himself. If the muslim koran or the hindu vedas or the channeled *messages* from new age mediums had even a fraction of the amount of already fulfilled Prophecy as the Bible, the world would be falling all over themselves to worship false gods but the World hates God, the One True God, our God of the Bible, so that even if they had the honesty and integrity to actually study God's Word, it would only be to them, foolishness. 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' 1 Corinthians 2:14

Only we, the true Children of God, can understand the Words of God because His Holy Spirit lives within us to give us understanding. We could memorize every prophecy and all the rest of God's Word and be able to quote it all, in context, and yet, the lost, if not drawn to God by His Holy Spirit, would only hear it as foolishness because his heart and mind are darkened by the god of this world, Satan. Sadly, most will never come to repentance; many will, but most never will.

Of course, one of the main reasons we want to understand God's prophetic Word for the End Times is so that we can more effectively witness to the lost but we must always remember: the salvation of any lost person is always and only God's responsibility. He is the One Who reveals Himself to those He has chosen, and He is the One Who draws them to Himself in repentance unto Salvation. Our responsibility is simply to tell the Truth of the Gospel to all we meet but never becoming discouraged when our words are rejected: 'Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and **many there be which go in thereat.** ¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be that find it.**' Matt 7:13 God's plan has never included the salvation of everyone... never. He chose, for Himself, a people, Israel and a bride for His Son, and we will praise Him forever that He set His love upon us, revealed Himself to us and drew us to Himself at exactly the moment He had always planned. That is why we tell others what we know and have experienced as His children.

So, lets begin:

Regarding Creation, regarding Prophecy and regarding all things: What is God's number one plan and purpose throughout all time and Eternity which includes and encompasses everything which has happened, is happening and will happen forever?

God's number one plan and purpose is... **the Glory of God**. From the moment God created *time*, from the moment He created the first angel... He has set in motion His number one purpose: all of His Creation would work together to fully glorify Himself forever.

This Truth can be difficult to understand. His creation of Lucifer... that God would be fully glorified in him and all the other angels who did foolishly rebel against God's rule. Adam and Eve... the serpent in the Garden... the fall of man... all accomplished within God's number one plan... the Glory of God. The rebellion of all humans; His salvation of Noah and seven others through the flood... Israel through all their rebellion, the horrible Crucifixion of His Son, the coming Antichrist and False Prophet and a world that, once again, fully rebels against Him... His return at Armageddon with the destruction of all His enemies... the final destruction and recreation of the Universe! All of it has been infinitely planned to be executed to glorify God forever!

The mistake many make is holding to the idea that in everything God does, He is reacting, that He is picking up the pieces of the failure of angels and humans and then making it better... setting in motion plan B or C or XYZ. God has had one plan and one purpose overall... the **Glory of God**; this is the reason we were created and the reason we were Elected from the foundation of the World.

But, you ask, isn't that selfish; isn't that pride?... shouldn't we not seek our own glory, our own advancement... 'He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh His glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.' John 7:18

Because God, alone, is Holy, Righteous, Good and worthy of all praise, He must be praised and glorified. For God to do anything else would be contrary to His Nature; He must be glorified because He alone is worthy to be glorified in **all things**, in **all places** through **all time and eternity**.

When we choose to understand, and believe, that God is fully in control and that His eternal plan is always being fulfilled, we can begin to trust Him more and more exactly with every area of our lives.

'Something 'bad' happened to me... something 'bad' is always happening to me... obviously God is not in control; if He was, these things would not be happening.' When we think like that, we are putting ourselves in the place of God, deciding that we know best, thinking, 'I'll tell you when something good has come from God... and I'll decide what things are good or bad...'

The truth is, when we think like that, we are actually thinking and acting just like Lucifer: 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! ¹³ For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Isaiah 14:12 We are saying, 'I will decide for myself what's good or bad; and if 'bad' things happen to me, either God doesn't love me or He is not really in control!'

It is the same temptation used in Genesis. *'God hasn't done the best for you... you can decide for yourself... He's keeping something good from you... go ahead... eat that fruit... what's the worst that could happen... come on... just one little bite... then you will be like God! Then you will know for yourself!* It's the same temptation he uses on us...'You can decide for yourself what is good or bad... God is keeping good things from you... He doesn't really love you or else that would never have happened to you... right?'

A couple of passages should help us to understand. First, an example so obvious that we should remember it always and refer back to it when we mistakenly think that God is not in control and that He doesn't love us because that 'bad' thing should not have happened to me:

'And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. ² And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? ³ Jesus answered, neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, **but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.**' John 9:1

This man had been born blind and most of us, especially if it had happened to us, or to a loved one, would say, 'That is a bad thing; how could God have done such a bad thing?' Jesus gives us the answer which we, if we were wise and understanding, would embrace for ourselves every time we think, 'This thing is wrong; it's bad; I have decided that God should not have done this; if He loved me this would not have happened to me.'

Blindness from birth... most would think that this is one of the worst things that could have happened to a person... but no... this man was born blind, many years before, in full anticipation of the moment the Lord Jesus Christ would come upon him and heal him so **that God would be glorified in him and through him.**

The Lord Jesus Christ gave us the answer... this was planned before the blind man was even born... how is it that God would be glorified through this seeming 'tragedy'? First, people who had known the man, in his blindness, would know that a wonderful miracle had been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ. And, even more, this man would, every day, for the rest of his life, praise and glorify God for what He had done. From that moment on, every person, with whom the man had contact, would hear, again and again, his praise, his thanks and his glorification of God. We should always be telling of God's wonderful work in our lives. And, even more importantly, this lifelong trial had, caused this man to gain patience, humility and wisdom which is the first purpose of every trial through which God takes us: 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (trials); ³ Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. ⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.' James 1:2

So many are reluctant to acknowledge that God would cause some 'problem' in their lives. God uses trials to form us into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ; the number one characteristic of Jesus Christ that He is creating in us, the most necessary and most Christ-like is patience.

Again, we are learning, first, the overall purpose of God is: the **Glory of God!** When we understand that, then we can begin to see the framework into which all other actions, history and prophecy fit... we will begin to fully understand all that God, through His Holy Spirit, has planned for us to learn together.

What does it mean to glorify, magnify and praise God? We hear people say, 'Praise God!' but is that really praising God? What does it mean to praise God? The Psalmist wrote, 'O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people. ² Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him; talk ye of all his wondrous works. ³ Glory ye in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.' Psalm 105:1

And... 'But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. ¹⁵ My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. ¹⁶ I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. ¹⁷ O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.' Psalm 71:14

Throughout the Psalms, we see David and other Psalmists praising and glorifying God and the Psalmist writes that his readers should praise and glorify God. But saying 'Praise God' is not really glorifying God. David glorifies God as he recounts all that God has done. Later, in Psalm 71:20, he writes: 'Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.' He is saying that God is the One Who brought those troubles upon him and it was God Who brought him through and back from each one.

Through every trial, God is love. He tells us that the first and most foundational aspect of love, in 1Cor 13, is patience, the patience to endure every trial. If we need help in understanding His hand in, and purpose for, any trial, James tells us, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.'

As to saying, 'Praise God!' and my saying, 'That is not really praising God.' If I were to give to you a large truck filled with Gold coins, large emeralds, rubies and sapphires, what would you do? First, you would say to me, 'Thank you! I love you! You are so good to me! Then what would you do? Would you say to me, 'Praise Tom!?' Would you go around to everyone and say, 'Praise Tom!?' No, because that would be meaningless. In order to really praise and glorify me, you would begin to cry out, 'Tom is so good, so gracious, he has done

wonderful things for me, he alone is worthy to be praised!' Do you see the difference? To say, 'Praise God' is rather meaningless. In order to genuinely praise Him, we must recount what He has done and tell others of His wondrous works, His love, mercy, patience, holiness, righteousness, etc. Actually, to say, 'Praise God,' is but a lazy shortcut and, importantly, *far less embarrassing before others*. Just take it home and think about it. To glorify and praise God is to first understand, and believe, that He is always good and that He is always fully in control of all things, at all times; we are to trust Him to eventually cause every trial to work for good in our lives and, finally, to always tell of His wondrous works, of His marvelous work in our lives; that is what it means to praise, to glorify and to give glory to God.

We glorify God by telling of what He has done in our lives... especially when we recount how He took what looked to us to be a negative thing and turned it all around to show itself to be a real blessing to us as we glorify Him by telling of His wondrous work in our lives... and in our new class, The New Bereans.

None of us saw this coming, did we! In Isaiah 43:18 we read: 'Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.'¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.' And... 'Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously; for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe, though it be told you.' Habakkuk 1:5

Now, to rightly divide God's Word, we recognize that these few verses were not written to us and their exact fulfillment is not in us but still there is always a principle which is even to us; God never changes and His Word, It remains forever...

Not every part of Scripture has been written **to us** but every Scripture is **for us**. His Word is ever active in us.

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.'¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' 2 Tim 3:16

'For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' Heb 4:12

Now we can begin to see how all prophecy fits into God's plan to fully glorify Himself forever!

The first thing we'll study will be the next things on God's prophetic clock: the Rapture and the battle of Ezekiel 38! Nothing else, prophetically, needs to happen before the Rapture or that battle can occur.

The fulfilled prophecy that really kicked off the End Times was the reestablishment of Israel as a Nation again, after having been scattered to the nations for nearly 2000 years. That was the miracle of which Jesus said, 'Now learn a parable of the fig tree; (Israel) When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.'³³ So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.³⁴ Verily I say unto you, **this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.**³⁵ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' Matt 24

Jesus was saying, the generation that sees Israel back in the Land would not pass until all things come to pass including the Rapture, Ezekiel 38, the rise of Antichrist, the Tribulation, Armageddon and Jesus' Second Coming to destroy all His enemies and to establish His Kingdom on Earth. I was born 4 years after the rebirth of Israel. **We are that generation which will not pass until He comes for us, at any moment, in the Rapture.**

Never let anyone convince you otherwise; that is Biblical Truth! We are one of Jesus Christ's special little flocks... within this larger flock at Grand View. God put us together and He, alone, kept us together and then miraculously rewarded our patience by creating us as a 'Brotherhood of the Word.' We will faithfully study His Word together, we will faithfully pray for and support each other and we will finally be lifted up into Glory, together, to be with Him forever.

Buckle up, strap in, we're in for an exciting adventure through the truth of God's Word and Prophecy!