

End Times Session Notes- Fall 2014

Does the Bible speak to what is happening in the world today? With wars between Israel and its neighbors, global terrorism, increasing frequency of famine, new types of diseases, increasing moral decay, collapsing financial markets...*where will it all lead?* Add to that, churches walking away from Biblical Truth and redefining sin as acceptable in both the Christian community and our country.

The Bible gives us so many answers to the questions of life, particularly in this day and time. If you are interested in understanding what the Bible says will be in our future, come to a series of Biblical studies on ***Sunday nights beginning November 2, 2014*** entitled:



Schedule: Sunday night beginning at 6:00pm- 7:30pm in the Sanctuary

<u>Date</u>	<u>Title of Session</u>
Nov 2, 2014	Signs of the Times
Nov 9, 2014	Who is the Anti-Christ?
Nov 16, 2014	Can one man rule the world?
Nov 23, 2014	All Hell Breaks Loose
Dec 7, 2014	Armageddon
Dec 21, 2014	Ultimate Destination Wedding Reception
Dec 28, 2014	Jesus' Second Coming
Jan 4, 2015	Touchdown!!
Jan 11, 2015	The Ultimate Hope
Jan 18, 2015	Q&A on End Times

This is a DVD series by Bryant Wright, Sr. Pastor at [Johnson Ferry Baptist Church](#) in Marietta, Georgia. We will have a brief introduction, play the DVD session, and end with Q & A. Each session will be facilitated by Jim Lay. **BRING YOUR BIBLE and join us!!**

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Session 1 – November 2, 2014 – Signs of the Times

Introduction

Thank you for coming tonight as we start this new series on the End Times.

Has it ever crossed your mind, as it has mine, “what in the world is going on”? Of course it has...

- Alarming rise in Muslim Faith throughout the world (and in the US)
- Radical Muslim/Islamic Terror moving from the Middle East to Europe, Canada, Australia, and to our own nation
- Ebola, Enterovirus and others coming to our shores with potential pandemic outcomes
- Rise in anti-Semitism again in Europe, and across the world (another holocaust possible)
- Killing and persecution of Christians in greater numbers than even in the days of the Caesars
- Israel- such a small country has taken worldwide prominence and the center of News? Why is that? Every day front page news, attempts for Peace in TV, Papers, Radio.
- Wars, conflicts, Caliphate of Islamic State, collapsing Iraq, increasing European Union, Ecumenical movements to pull Roman and Eastern Orthodox, and Muslim faiths together
- Abandonment of the Bible, redefining Sin, Lawlessness, Societal slide into immorality, declaring what is evil to be “good” and good to be “evil”

Where does it lead, where does it all go, how does it affect me? We will address all these in this study we are beginning. Before we start I want to take a few minutes to explain what we are doing, why it is important, and why I chose this particular format for the study.

What we are doing: We are beginning a 10 part series, and will continue through early January 2015 on Sunday nights to explain the End Times topics highlighted in the published schedule. Each session will consist of an introduction, a DVD presentation, and if we have time, there will be a Q & A session each night on the topic of discussion.

Why it is important. The Bible is nearly 30% prophecy, which is to say that when the particular book was written, it contained scriptures that detailed something yet to happen. Almost all of the books of the Bible contain some prophecy, and some are very prophetic. If the Bible is God’s Word to us, and I believe that it is, then we need to read and take in all the scripture God has given us. Prophecy is given to do several things for us...first is to make us aware of God’s plan for the World, the Jews, the Gentiles, and Christians. It addresses both God’s grace and His judgment. Second, understanding Biblical prophecy gives you a sense of urgency in both witnessing and discipleship, as well as Purity in living. If indeed the time is near, what are our priorities? *It also will place the world events in the context of God’s eternal plan from the beginning.*

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Why I chose this particular format. There are many Bible teachers who teach on Bible prophecy, but this series is different in some important ways. It is targeted to Christians in the church who are not knowledgeable on what the Bible says about End Times. For both JFBC and FBCD this is an important place to begin. Also it is evangelical and stresses the importance of knowing Jesus now, and being about His business. Each session brings the salvation question front and center. Lastly it is not overly complex with terms and concepts that will glaze over your eyes. It is a great starting place. Since it is just completed today, 11-2-14 it is fresh and contemporary with the issues of the day and on your mind. There are many ways to see scripture relating to end times, and Bryant will lay out the most common thoughts and tell you where his study leads him. I mostly agree with him and where I differ I will point it out and why I believe the way I do. As in all Bible study, each of us needs to do the work for ourselves by reading the scripture, studying the meanings, and letting the Holy Spirit guide our thoughts.

My own persuasion is **Pre-trib, Pre-millennial**. You will understand what this means as we go through this study, and we can talk about it further as the session's progress. This view is because I take the Bible literally except when it is clearly meant to be non-literal, and since the fulfilled prophecy so far has all been fulfilled literally, I see no reason to think it will not be that way in the future.

About our speaker... Bryant Wright is the Senior Pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, GA. He is the founding Pastor of this church and has seen dramatic growth in his years of being there. He is a past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, an author, and sought after speaker. Also importantly (I think), he started his career as a successful businessman who graduated from University of South Carolina, and became convinced of a call on his life to become a Pastor, and returned to Southern Seminary to complete his training before starting JFBC. His style and use of the language is easy to understand and easy to listen to.

Some important thoughts before we begin.

Prophecy is History written in advance

A prophet of God in the Bible speaks God's truth in both the time of the prophecy, and many times for a future time. Sometimes prophetic writing will remain obscure until the time when God chooses to reveal it – this is called progressive revelation. We see things clearly today that we would not have seen years earlier. You will see examples of this as the study progresses.

By reading and understanding God's Word, we can have a deeper understanding of what is happening today. We can build a Biblical Lens through which to see the world events. We should always interpret World Events through the lens of a Biblical Worldview, not the other way around. You will be amazed at what peace and comfort that provides you as you accept that God is Sovereign, and is in total control of events.

Birth Pangs – Some of the events mentioned have always been with us. This is not new. There have been earthquakes, famines, evil and despotic rulers all through man's history. The "sign" is the ever increasing frequency and intensity of them, happening all at once.

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Take note of the signs mentioned, the graphs, and your own knowledge about what you are seeing every day in the news and in this country.

End Times – Are we in them?? In the little book of Joel, the prophet speaks about the **Day of the Lord**, and in Joel Ch 2:28-29 says:

*I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*

In Acts 2:16-21 Peter references this scripture of the Prophet Joel as being fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, so the end times began at **Pentecost**.

I certainly think we are in the final days of the End Times because of all the signs and events predicted and coming true before our eyes, but no one knows the dates. One of my other hopes for you is that you will see that the Bible is not a dusty old book of things long ago, but tells us of the times in which we are living today. We are in God's timeline...as we speak...and if we look we can see what is coming.

Now I want to further explain this with illustration that I have found very helpful in understanding Bible Prophecy and Biblical Truth. I hope it is helpful to you

See this Pearl Necklace...¹

Illustration – Take a graduated pearl necklace and notice several things

1. It has a beginning, an end, and a middle
2. In the middle is the largest or most profound pearl
3. As it lies on the neck, it starts up high, falls to the middle, and ends up high
4. Each pearl is important, in its own right
5. Held together by a string or thread
6. If you break thread holding it together
 - a. Then you have many pearls laying all over the floor
 - b. The sense of a necklace lost
7. We can pick up a few pearls and keep them but we don't have the neckace

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So it is with the Bible:

1. It has a beginning, a centerpoint, and an end
2. The centerpoint is the first coming of Jesus Christ and His Life, Death, & Resurrection
3. It starts with God in Heaven and Ends with God in Heaven, and the life of Man falls until it reaches the centerpoint where Jesus comes
4. Each pearl is a truth of God. The more we study the more pearls of wisdom or truth we have collected
5. If the necklace is broken and all the pearls fall on the floor, we can pick up pearls (truth) and hold them...even many pearls or truths, but we have lost the sense of the necklace and the purpose for it
6. The Bible is like that. Each time we come to church (hopefully) we pick up pearls but most of us today don't even have the notion of the necklace. What we have is a little bag of pearls we have picked up over the years. How they relate and the bigger story they tell is lost to us.

Prophecy is the string or thread that holds the pearls together and shows us that God is NOT THROUGH with us yet. We have many more truths to add to the necklace until we end in Eternity with Him.

Where are we in the necklace now? ...Somewhere between Christ (centerpoint) and the end in Heaven. ***The pearls left are the subject of the discussion on the End Times***

As the pearls together, in the order intended, provide a necklace... the Bible in both testaments provides the details of God's ordered plan for us from beginning to ending.

In studying Bible Prophecy, you can begin to fit all the pieces together to show you the wonderful plan of God through his Grace, His Love, His Righteousness, and His Judgment for those who do and do not accept His free gift of salvation and redemption.

Let's start the session now and we can talk again at the end.

[Signs of the Times]

References:

¹ the illustration on the Pearl Necklace (with some changes by me) comes from a sermon by Colin Smith – Pastor at The Orchard Church in suburban Chicago, IL; see link: <http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/unlocking-the-bible/listen/coming-part-1-256250.html>

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Resources and Articles: (with links to original sources)

I have only scratched the surface with these articles. If you have access to other media sources, they are all brimming with details of things in the US that are pushing out God and replacing Him with either the State or other anti-God thinking. Olive Tree Views is a good aggregation point for these articles so I am referencing the links on their website.

15 signs of the Times:

<http://www.charismanews.com/opinion/heres-the-deal/45851-15-signs-of-the-times-indicating-judgment>

Compendium of Christian Persecution:

<http://olivetreeviews.org/news/christian-persecution>

Cultural Decline in US:

<http://olivetreeviews.org/news/cultural-decline>

Spiritual Deception:

<http://olivetreeviews.org/news/spiritual-deception>

New World Order:

<http://olivetreeviews.org/news/new-world-order>

Anti-Semitism:

<http://olivetreeviews.org/news/anti-semitism>