

Phase 1 Overview, From Now to Jesus' Return

The Future, Session 2

Introduction

- Rev 1:1(a), “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place....”
 - The revelation is about Jesus & Father wants us to understand it
 - Jesus said in the gospels he wanted us to know what will happen so we'll be prepared and not deceived
- The goal of end-times study should be to understand that God is in total control, that he has all the details worked out, & whatever happens to us is part of his plan

Birth of Jesus' Earthly Kingdom

- Major phases of end times
 - Lk 17:21, the kingdom of God currently is within believers
 - 2 Co 5:20, we are now Christ's ambassadors
 - His kingdom already exists & we're his official representatives in foreign territory
- Childbirth analogy

Currently: _____

Beginning of Birth Pains: _____

Great Distress: _____

Cosmic Disturbance: _____

Day of the Lord: _____

- I suggest the major phases of the end times represent the birth of a new kingdom on earth, which will totally replace the current sinful kingdom

Timing Markers

- There are key events identified in scripture that show when each end-times phase begins or ends
 - These verses use words like “before, after, then, immediately”
- These are essential to understanding the end times

Beginning of Birth Pains

- Are you aware of any event that clearly marks the start of the beginning of birth pains?
- Primary characteristic: harmful world events occur with greater severity & frequency

Great Distress

- “*megas thlipsis*”
 - *megas* (adj): great, as in remarkable or out of the ordinary in degree, magnitude, effect
 - i.e., *megas* = “extreme” or “extraordinary”
 - *thlipsis* (n): distress, affliction, suffering, trouble, tribulation (KJV)
 - Jn 16:33, Jesus said “In this world you will have [*thlipsis*]. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”
- Abomination that causes desolation
 - Mt 24:15, 21¹⁵ “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel [Jesus tells them how people should respond]²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again.”
 - According to this passage, what signals the beginning of the “great distress”?
 - Where will the abomination be set up, according to these verses?
 - Dan 9:27, “He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”
 - Who is this person?
 - If he is responsible for setting up the abomination, which marks the beginning of the Great Distress, then when will the man of lawlessness be revealed?
 - “confirm” (Heb, v, *gbr*): (1) to be strong or superior; (2) to make something strong, firm, or sure
 - “covenant” (Heb, n, b^e-rit): covenant, agreement, treaty, alliance
 - The new treaty will be designed to stop the conflict for seven years
 - The Great Distress will last 3½ years, because Jesus said it would begin when the abomination is set up; other NT passages support the 3½ year great distress
- Conclusion: The Great Distress will last 3½ years, beginning with the abomination

Cosmic Disturbance

- Mt 24:15-21 describes the period of extreme distress [*megathlipsis*], unequaled in human history
- Mt 24:29, “Immediately after the [*thlipsis*] of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’”
 - When will this cosmic disturbance begin?
- Joel 2:30-31, ³⁰ “I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”
 - According to this passage, what end times phase begins after the cosmic event?
- Conclusion: The Great Distress and the Day of the Lord are distinct from each other & separated by a major cosmic event

Day of the Lord

- Why is it called the “Day of the Lord”?
- Gathering of the elect (“the rapture”)
 - 2 Th 2:1-3, ¹ “Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.”
 - According to the first two verses, during what phase of the end times will the “rapture” occur?
 - According to verse three, what must happen before the day of the Lord?
 - Mt 24:29-31, ²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ ³⁰ At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”
 - According to this passage, what events must occur before the Lord gathers the saints?

- 1 Th 4:16-17, ¹⁶ “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”
 - What group of believers will ascend to the Lord first, according to verse 16?
- Rev 7:9, 14, ⁹ “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.... ¹⁴ These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”
 - Who are these people and what end time phase have they experienced?
 - This is the first description in Book of Revelation of the saints being in heaven & they came out of the great distress
- Rev 20:4-5, ⁴ “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ ... This is the first resurrection.”
 - According to verse 4, who are these people and what end time phase have they experienced?
 - “first” (Gk, adj, *protos*): first, preceding all others in time or space or degree
 - How many resurrections can there be before the first one?
- Conclusion: The first and only gathering of the saints, including the resurrection of the deceased saints, will occur after the Great Distress and during the Day of the Lord
- Judgment seat of Christ
 - Lk 14:13-14, ¹³ “But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”
 - When does this suggest the saints will be rewarded for good works?

- 2 Co 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”
 - What occurs at the judgment seat of Christ?
 - According to Luke 14:14, when will that occur?
- Conclusion: The judgment seat of Christ will occur after the saints are caught away
- God’s wrath
 - Rev 6:12-14, describes the cosmic disturbance: sun turns black, moon turns blood red, stars fall to earth
 - Rev 6:15-17, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”
 - If this happens after the cosmic disturbance (verses 12-14), in what period does it happen?
 - Rev 11:15, 18, ¹⁵ “The seventh angel sounded his trumpet The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever... ¹⁸ The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great.”
 - “angry” (Gk, v, *orgizo*): to be furious or full of anger
 - Who is furious or full of anger, and why?
 - “wrath” (Gk, n, *orge*): anger, judgment, wrath
 - Whose wrath is this?
 - According to verse 18, the time has come for what?
 - Rev 15:1-2, ¹ “I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues – last, because with them God’s wrath is completed. ² And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name.”
 - What have these people experienced, according to verse 2?
 - Rev 19 (same sequence again)
 - v 6, “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.”
 - v 9, “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”
 - v 15, “He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”
 - Conclusion: God’s wrath occurs during the Day of the Lord after the saints have been removed from the earth

- Other major events of Day of the Lord that don't include timing markers
 - Jesus returns to earth with the saints
 - world's armies gather at Armageddon to defeat Jesus
 - they lose
 - Jesus orders the beast & false prophet thrown into lake of fire
 - Jesus orders Satan thrown into the Abyss for 1000 years
 - Jesus begins reign of peace, justice & righteousness on earth; we reign with him

Timing Overview

- Beginning of Birth Pains
 - tragic events happen with increasing severity & frequency
- Great Distress
 - begins when abomination is set up in the Temple's holy place by the man of lawlessness
 - man of lawlessness revealed then or earlier
- Cosmic Disturbance
 - occurs immediately after the time of great distress
 - and before the day of the Lord
- Day of the Lord
 - it's Jesus' day; he's clearly in charge
 - Jesus' appearance in the sky
 - the gathering of the church
 - judgment seat of Christ at the resurrection
 - wedding supper of the Lamb
 - God's wrath on earth
 - Jesus' return to earth to reign

Closing

- The end times are about the transition from the current corrupt world system to Jesus' kingdom of peace, justice and righteousness on earth
- God has given us detailed descriptions of this transition so we'll be prepared for it spiritually and psychologically, which will also enable us to participate in what he does
- He is in total control, has all the details worked out, and whatever happens to us is part of his plan
- No fear. God will do what is best for us and is looking forward to us being with him.