

Week 1: Waiting for Jesus's Return

Jonathan Srock / General

Living in the Last Days Life Group

Description: Describing where we are in human history is not an easy task. We live in the last days and God has expectations for us. But what are they? What does it mean to wait for Jesus's return? What's a basic understanding of the last days and the end times?

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Teaching (45 minutes)

Difference between "Last Days" and "End Times"

I'm sure you've heard it before, but we are living in the last days. We have been living in the last days before Christ's return for over 2000 years.

How do I know? The last days began on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus's ascension into heaven. We know this because Peter preached and began with that statement ([Acts 2:16-17](#)).

He referenced [Joel 2:28-29](#) and right before it said, "In the last days..." The last days began then and continue until the return of Jesus in His second coming.

Jesus will return on the clouds and we who believe in Him will be "caught up" in the air. This is called the Rapture of the Church. Rapture is a Latin word, the same word for "caught up" that appears in [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#).

That's where we get this idea of Jesus's Second Coming. Paul talks about this event in [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#) and [1 Corinthians 15:50-58](#).

So what's the difference between the last days in the end times? Christ's return will be the event that separates these two time periods. The last days are the

Church waiting for the Lord's return. The end times are the events that will happen after the Church has left the earth.

End times refers to the beginning of the end, a 1007 year period of human history. For 7 years after we leave, the Antichrist will rise to power and turn the whole world against Jesus. After those 7 years Jesus will return and reign for 1000 years.

How to Tell When It's the End

Luke 12:54-56 ESV

He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, 'A shower is coming.' And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat,' and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?"

Matthew 24:32-35 ESV

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

When you read [Matthew 24-25](#), Jesus talks about the end times, but He gives us an extremely valuable look into the last of the last days.

He talks about how things will get worse and worse, events will increase in intensity in the last days before the end. We need to be aware of all these signs so we can interpret where we are in human history.

Let's take a closer look at [Matthew 24:3-28](#).

Matthew 24:3-8 ESV

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise

against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

- The Church led astray by false Christs and false teachers.
- Wars and rumors of wars. Nation rising against nation.
- Famines and earthquakes.

Matthew 24:9-14 ESV

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

- Persecution of the saints.
- A great falling away and betrayal, hate in the Church.
- Lawlessness and hate.
- A great revival as the gospel is proclaimed.

Matthew 24:15-20 ESV

“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

Daniel 9:27 ESV

And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.”

Daniel 11:31 ESV

Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

What is the abomination of desolation? One example from history, Antiochus IV, profaned the temple by placing the statue of Zeus inside it and sacrificing pigs on the altar.

Whatever this abomination of desolation will look like when the antichrist does it in the temple in Jerusalem, that will happen halfway through the Tribulation.

Paul gives some insight into how he will declare himself to be God and sit in the temple of God (perhaps on the mercy seat, the top cover of the ark of the covenant. We cannot be sure.

Timewise, the abomination of desolation will happen halfway through the antichrist's rule. We will not be here when that happens. The rapture will take place before the beginning of the antichrist's rule.

You will notice that Jesus has said "the end is not yet until He gets to the fire that the abomination of desolation.

Crash Course in End Times Events (Eschatology)

We do not have to go into the details of the end times, but we must understand the lay of the land from our view in the sky as if we were flying over the events in an airplane.

This is a very quick overview of what will happen and the order in which it is to happen.

If you don't agree with me on these events, their order, or the timings I present, that's okay. I'm probably not right in everything about the end times. We can disagree and still love one another. If not, you might need to take some things up with Jesus.

First, let's define some terms. There are four views of how the end will shape up. These are all views that deal with the Tribulation.

- Pre-Trib – Christ will return for His Church in the rapture before the antichrist takes power.

- Mid-Trib – Christ will return for His Church in the rapture at the halfway mark of seven years of Tribulation.
- Post-Trib – Christ will return for His Church in the rapture after the seven year tribulation.
- Amillennialism – There is no tribulation or millennial reign of Christ.

I am approaching end times events as a Pre-Tribber. I present Christ returning for His Church before the antichrist begins to rule. My reason for this is that the Tribulation is God’s judgment on the inhabitants of the earth for their wickedness. We as His children will not go through His wrath. Others have called this the Pre-Wrath view. I’m fine with that terminology. Others have said that “I’m going up in the first boat.”

The rapture will take place before the Antichrist takes his place and creates a new world order. He will rule over the earth religiously, politically, socially, and economically. We will not be here during his reign. However, they may reveal himself before we leave.

The passage that talks about the antichrist as the man of lawlessness ([2 Thessalonians 2](#)) also prophesies that the “restrainer” to is probably the Holy Spirit or the Church will be removed for full-on wickedness to happen on the earth.

The Tribulation (capital T) is a seven-year period in which the antichrist will have complete reign over the earth. Daniel prophesies that halfway through these seven years will be the abomination of desolation that kicks off the Great Tribulation, the last 3 1/2 years which will be even worse than the first 3 1/2 years.

This will also be seven years of which God pours out His wrath against an unrepentant and rebellious people on the earth.

After the 7-year period, Jesus will return with His saints and angels to fight the battle of Armageddon against the antichrist, his false prophet, and the kings of the earth ([Revelation 19](#)?).

After His decisive victory over these enemies, Jesus will institute His millennial reign over the earth in which He rules in unparalleled righteousness and with an iron hand because of the wickedness of the earth ().

A short time after this, Satan will be let out rule over the earth for a short time (). Next comes the great white throne judgment () in which the wicked will be eternally condemned, the devil will be thrown into the lake of fire, and the righteous will be judged according to what they did on the earth and their rewards ().

The final action will be the new heavens and the new earth. (). This is where God will create and bring down from heaven the New Jerusalem, our dwelling place forever with God ([Revelation 21-22](#)).

You Are Here (Where We Are on the Map of History)

Illustration: Map at the mall

This quick overview leaves us with the question, “Where are we now in this scheme of things?”

Because Jesus hasn’t returned for us yet, we are living in the last days shortly before the end times begin. You could say we’re at the end of the last days. We have begun to see events in the world prophesied in the Bible and other forms of judgment ramping up and intensifying.

This means that everything we are commanded to do in the Bible is our marching orders until the return of Jesus. This whole life group is about what God expects of us and what we must be doing until His return.

What Does Waiting on the Lord Mean?

We are in a holding pattern, waving for Jesus’s return. But that doesn’t mean we’re supposed to sit around. It doesn’t mean we run and hide cloistered away in some isolationist group.

What is waiting on the Lord and how do we do it? How does the Bible describe waiting on the Lord?

Waiting refers many times in the Bible to patience. Waiting on the Lord brings blessing, security, and deliverance. The Lord judged Israel when they did not wait on Him.

Waiting on the Lord means that we look to God to intervene in less than favorable circumstances ([Psalm 27:12-13](#)). It is a venture of faith. We anticipate the time that God will act ([Psalms 38:15](#); [39:7](#); [135:8](#)).

Waiting the Lord is marked by God's blessing ([Isaiah 30:18](#); [Hosea 12:6](#)). Wait for answers to prayer ([Psalms 25:5](#)). It is the working out of our hope.

Waiting on the Lord is an expectant, patient hope that God will answer your prayer, rescue you from harm or your enemy, and green His purposes to fruition.

Psalm 33:20 ESV

Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.

Isaiah 8:17 ESV

I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.

Psalm 106:13 ESV

But they soon forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel.

Exodus 32:1-2 ESV

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me."

Isaiah 30:18 ESV

Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.

Zephaniah 3:18 ESV

I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach.

1 Corinthians 1:7 ESV

so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

To wait is to be ready for service at a moments notice.

What we know about the wait. We've been waiting for over 2000 years. But Peter gives us insight as to why we are waiting so long ([2 Peter 3:8-9](#)).

How to Wait on the Lord

What not to do in waiting. Do not rush to fulfill something by your abilities and resources. Do not become lazy or not do anything. Do not lose hope in God's ability to act in His timing.

Expectant waiting is when we know by faith God will move in our circumstances. We wait on Him to do what we ask. We do not lose hope or faith in Him or His timing and ways.

Hope working with faith. Waiting on the Lord is to continue to hope in Him alone and trust He will act. No matter how patient we must be or how long we must wait, we do not give in to impatience or doubt.

God's expectation in the wait. God expects us to serve Him in the meantime be faithful with what we know of His will and let Him want us to do as already revealed to us. It does not hurt to encourage one another as Peter encourages us in this waiting process.

Discussion (30 minutes)

Application (10 minutes)