

A VBVMi **GROUP** STUDY

END TIMES

A STUDY OF
PROPHECY



VERSE BY VERSE MINISTRY
INTERNATIONAL
TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Stephen Armstrong & Houston Heflin, EdD

www.vbvmi.org

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INTRODUCTION



This study was created to help you, your class, or small group understand more about the *end times*. You may have heard this topic called *eschatology*, but we will be using the term end times. To help you in your study, we will look at Revelation, Daniel, and some of the New Testament letters. These Scriptures will help you understand what the Bible has to say about what has been, what is, and what will come.

A CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC

We want to acknowledge from the beginning that this is an area of study that has some controversy associated with it. There are a lot of disagreements within the church about what the Bible has to say about this important topic. Regardless of our perspective of this topic, followers of Jesus can still agree on the most important things.

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL

Jesus is God's Son, He is the way to the Father, and He is the Savior of the world. Through faith in Jesus we are given the great gifts of forgiveness and eternal life with God. The sins that separate us from God and harm our relationships with others are forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus, who died on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day. He overcame death and invites His disciples to follow Him, not only in how we live our lives on earth, but also in how we will overcome death to live forever in heaven. These are all things we have been told and can be sure of (see John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Romans 5:10, 10:9).

STUDYING FOR WISDOM AND GUIDANCE

Christians are farless in agreement about details of Christ's return, yet understanding His second coming and other questions of the end times is still important. Our prayer for you is this material will guide you to greater understanding of Scripture and greater anticipation of the Lord's fulfillment of His promises. We are confident the Holy Spirit will teach you as you pursue Christ in the Scriptures, and Verse By Verse Ministry International stands ready to assist you in your journey of discovering the full counsel of God's Word.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

It's helpful to have an idea of where you would like to go before setting off on a journey. In that spirit we've created a few overarching goals for participants in this study.

Our goals for you in this study are:

1. To obtain a foundational knowledge of the Bible's teaching on end times;
2. To gain confidence in your ability to understand biblical prophecy;
3. To grow in your relationship with Jesus through a study of His Word;
4. And to live a more Christ-like life in response to what you learn.

OUTLINE OF LESSONS

Each lesson follows the same format consisting of these eight sections:



PRAYER: Begin every lesson with prayer, inviting God to open your eyes, ears, and hearts to see what He wants to teach you through His Word.



REVIEW: Discuss a few review questions as you begin so you or your group can recall what you've already learned as a foundation for new learning.



VIDEO: Watch the video provided for each lesson. Each video is about twenty minutes long.



DISCUSSION: Record your observations and share them with your group (if applicable). You may not have time to cover every question, so focus on the questions that most interest you or your group.



APPLICATION: Each lesson leads to application. We want you and your group to find yourself in the text by appreciating how the Bible is offering guidance for your life.



PRAYER: End your study time in prayer, thanking the Lord for His Word and any insights you were given in that day's lesson. Ask the Lord for the faith and courage to follow Jesus and to live out what you have learned.



HOMEWORK: Optional homework tasks are provided if you want to study in more depth before the next lesson.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: We offer references to more study materials available from our comprehensive online study library at vbvmi.org.

OVERVIEW OF LESSONS

LESSON 1

The Structure of Revelation

Outline and Interpretation (Rev. 1:19)

 Video 1 (13:22)

LESSON 2

The Church Age and the Seven Letters

The Seven Letters (Rev. 2-3)

 Video 2 (18:36)

LESSON 3

The Great Apostasy

The Great Apostasy (Rev. 3; 2 Thess. 2; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3)

 Video 3 (22:26)

LESSON 4

Understanding God's Timeline

Ages and Last Days

 Video 4 (13:03)

LESSON 5

The Age of the Gentiles (Daniel 2 and 7)

Purpose for the Age of Gentiles (Lev. 26; Deut. 29; Deut. 30)

 Video 5 (17:28)

LESSON 6

The Seventy Sevens (Daniel 9)

The Final Seven

 Video 6 (25:09)

LESSON 7

Signs of the Times

Events Prior to Daniel's Final Seven

 Video 7 (10:56)

LESSON 8

The End of the Age

Signs of the End of the Age (Olivet Discourse—Matt. 24)

 Video 8 (35:04)

LESSON 9

The Resurrection of the Bride

(Rev. 4-5; 1 Thess. 1, 5; 1 Cor. 15)

The Jewish Wedding Tradition

 Video 9 (21:41)

LESSON 10

The Departure of Christ

The Reason for Jesus's Departure (Luke 13)

The Messianic Miracle

The Unforgivable Sin

 Video 10 (22:39)

LESSON 11

The Return of Christ

The Covenants with Israel

 Video 11 (12:42)

LESSON 12

The Saving of Israel

Armageddon

The Saving of Israel

 Video 12 (25:10)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS



If you are studying in a small group, your group leader/facilitator will determine how you will use this material. Depending on meeting length, group interests, and other factors, your leader may skip some sections of each lesson, assign homework, or make other changes to suit your group's needs. Nevertheless, we encourage all students to read through every question, especially in the Application section.

ACCESSING END-TIMES VIDEOS

Part of each group meeting time is devoted to viewing a short teaching video featuring Stephen Armstrong. This video is an essential part of each lesson. All videos are available via streaming over the Internet at www.vbvmiendtimesstudy.org as well as in the Videos section of the VBVMI website (www.vbvmi.org/videos). Videos are also available for viewing through our mobile apps and on the VBVMI AppleTV app.

If you have access to a reliable internet connection at your group meeting location, we recommend connecting a laptop computer, tablet, or smartphone directly to a larger screen (i.e., a TV) and streaming the videos from the Internet during class time.

In cases where an Internet connection is not available, you may download the videos to your device ahead of time. Then simply play each week's video using the copy stored on your device. (Please note all videos are protected by copyright and are free for viewing and distribution but may not be sold or altered.)

In cases where it is not possible to view the videos during class time, we recommend students view each week's video before the class meeting. Use the additional meeting time for the Review, Discussion, and Application sections.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

While the *End Times Group Study* curriculum was designed for groups, it can also be used by individual students working alone. Obviously, individual students can't participate in group discussion or ask questions, so our ministry offers online support for answering your questions and connecting you with other students. Please visit the *End Time Group Study* website (www.vbvmiendtimesstudy.org) for more information.

The VBVM website (www.vbvmi.org) also offers helpful resources and supplemental materials to aid in your study. In particular, we offer a complete verse-by-verse study of the book of Revelation, which is a great resource for those desiring a deeper study of eschatology.

Should you need additional help during your study, you may submit questions to VBVM through our website or by email at letters@versebyverseministry.org.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR LEADERS



We've designed this 12-week group study especially for Bible study groups, Sunday school classes, life groups, and other small group meetings. Each weekly lesson directs students through a series of activities that can be accomplished in as little as one hour. Students are not required to study outside the group meeting, though optional homework is available for those seeking a more challenging study.

This curriculum is adaptable to different group needs and leadership styles. Depending on the length of your meeting time, group size, and spiritual needs of your students, you may vary the time devoted to each part of a lesson. For example, some leaders may choose to follow our format closely by answering every question, while other leaders may decide to skip some questions in favor of more discussion time.

Therefore, we encourage leaders to use our materials in whatever way best suits the needs and interests of your study group.

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Should you need additional help in answering students' questions during your study, you may submit questions to VBVMi through our website or by email at letters@versebyverseministry.org.

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR GROUPS

SECTION	60-Min. Meeting	90+ Min. Meeting	COMMENTS
 PRAYER	1 Min.	>2 Min.	Select a willing individual to pray on behalf of the entire group.
 REVIEW	<5 Min.	>10 Min.	Can be eliminated in favor of giving time to other sections.
 VIDEO	13-35 Min.	13-35 Min.	All videos can be found at www.vbvmiendtimesstudy.org . On weeks with longer videos, reduce or eliminate the Review section. On weeks with shorter videos, allocate extra time to Discussion or Application.
 DISCUSSION	<20 Min.	>30 Min.	Cover as many questions as desired, focusing on those that generate the most interest in your group.
 APPLICATION	<10 Min.	>20 Min.	Application questions can be covered in the group time or assigned as homework.
 PRAYER	2 Min.	>6 Min.	If more group prayer time is desired, reduce or eliminate the Review section.
 HOMEWORK	Varies	Varies	Homework is optional. If a leader assigns homework weekly, substitute a Homework Review time for the normal Review section each week.

2. What goals do you have for this study? Is there any special knowledge or understanding you're pursuing about this topic? Are there any questions you're hoping will be answered through this study?



VIDEO 1
The Structure of Revelation
Outline and Interpretation
(Rev. 1:19)

All videos are available for viewing or download at:
vbvmiendtimesstudy.org

DISCUSSION

1. How would you summarize the major points you learned from the video?



4. Review **Revelation chapter 1** together (or read if you have time). Notice how John's encounter with Jesus is different from his experience with Jesus on earth. What impact does this have on John's understanding of prophecy?

5. In **Revelation 1:17** John's response as he encounters Jesus is to drop to the ground in fear. The most frequent instruction by angels as they introduce themselves throughout the Bible is "Do not be afraid." Something about the presence of angelic beings startles people and causes an instinctive reaction of fear. Consider the examples from Scripture below. Why do you think human beings feel fear in the presence of angels?

"When Zechariah saw the angel he was startled and gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah'" (Luke 1:13).

"Mary was greatly troubled... but the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary'" (Luke 1:30).

"The shepherds were terrified, but the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid'" (Luke 2:10).



PRAYER

Thank God for the victory Jesus has over death and for the opportunity to join with Jesus in resurrection to eternal life.



OPTIONAL HOMEWORK

1. Draw an image of the vision John sees in **Revelation 1:10-16**.

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4. The number seven represents wholeness or completeness in the Bible.

The number *seven* has a certain biblical meaning assigned to it; the idea is complete wholeness, or 100%. For example, God’s creative work was completed and finished in seven days. The seven letters can be understood as letters that are written to the *whole* church. Here are a few more examples of the number *seven* representing completion:

- seven days of creation (Gen. 2:1-3)
- seven days Israel marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:4)
- seven times Naaman dipped in the Jordan River to be healed (2 Kings 5:14)
- seven baskets full of pieces collected after 4,000 fed (Mark 8:8)
- seven men selected to resolve an early church conflict (Acts 6:1-6)
- seven golden lampstands (Rev. 1:12)

Why do you think God assigns symbolic meaning to numbers in Scripture in this way?

5. Laodicea was a prosperous, independent city in the Roman Empire. It was a large, commercial banking city known for its black-wool industry (Rev. 3:17-18), medical school (3:17), and eye ointment (3:18). It was also known for its role as the banking center of the region.

“You are neither hot nor cold” (3:15) is a reference to the Laodicea river valley, where river water comes into it from hot sulfuric springs and cold mountain streams.

In AD 60 the city was destroyed by an earthquake but was so independent they rebuilt the city without any assistance from Rome. They were rich and self-reliant. Laodicea means “people ruling” or “judgment of the people.”

Why did Jesus draw upon the geographic and cultural features of a city like Laodicea when writing to the church?



APPLICATION

1. Assign one of the first six letters (in Rev. 2 and 3) to individuals or small groups to read and then do the following:

a. Identify what they are *affirmed* for.

b. Identify what they are *confronted* about.

c. Describe what they are *promised*.

2. Complete the following chart to help you compare and contrast the letters to the churches:

CHURCH	AFFIRMATION	CONFRONTATION	PROMISE
Ephesus			
Smyrna			
Pergamum			
Thyatira			
Sardis			
Philadelphia			
Laodicea			



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.versebyverseministry.org/videos/revelation-study>

Revelation Study: Lessons 2A, 2B, 3A, and 3B

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5. The true church is a subset of the whole. Proportionally, during the time of the church of Laodicea, the true, faithful followers of Jesus will become fewer in number. This is the time of the great apostasy.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 and **1 Timothy 4:1-3** describe a time when there is a falling away within the larger setting of those who call themselves the church.

Paul says the apostasy (a falling away) comes first, before the end. Paul is not talking about individual Christians ceasing to be Christian here. He is talking about the community changing from one that is mostly Christian to one that is less and less Christian.

Explain *the great apostasy* in your own words. Why do you suppose the Lord allows this to come upon the church in the last days? How is knowing about the great apostasy important to our understanding of prophecy?

6. Read **2 Timothy 3:1-5**. In what ways does this describe our context and culture today?

7. The seventh age, or time period, of the church coincides with the rise of democracy. Historically, this is a unique time because never before have so many countries been ruled democratically by their own people. How do you understand this connection between the letter to Laodicea and the church today?



APPLICATION

1. Knowing we are living in the end times, we should evaluate our relationship with Jesus and what we believe about Him. Describe your foundational beliefs about Jesus.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.versebyverseministry.org/videos/revelation-study>

Revelation Study: Lessons 2A, 2B, 3A, and 3B

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PRAYER

End with Daniel's prayer to God in **Daniel 2:20-22**:

God, may Your name be praised forever and ever.

Wisdom and power are yours.

You change times and seasons; You set up kings and You remove them.

You give wisdom to the wise and You give knowledge to the discerning.

You reveal deep and hidden things; You know what lies in darkness,

And light dwells with You. Thank You for all of your gifts. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



OPTIONAL HOMEWORK

1. Read **Daniel chapter 2**. Diagram the statue and the interpretation of the dream in **Daniel 2:36-45**.

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6. Read Leviticus 26:40-45.

A “loophole” in the old covenant permits the nation of Israel to receive the blessings in another way, but a national confession of faith is required.

7. Read the following summary of this lesson and discuss anything that may be unclear in your group. This is an important conclusion in this study, so don't move beyond this point if you are confused. Rewatch the video for Lesson 6 if necessary.

- The old covenant requires perfect obedience to the Law by all generations of Israel.
- Failure to perfectly keep the Law results in the curses of the Law.
- The age of the gentiles is the fulfillment of the curses against Israel.
- One day Israel will confess Christ and receive the blessings of the kingdom on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant.

Outline of **Daniel 9**

- 9:1-3 Daniel's Mistake
- 9:4-19 Daniel's Prayer
- 9:20-23 Gabriel's Rebuke

The purpose of the seventy sevens (Dan. 58:20) is for Israel and Jerusalem to:

1. finish the transgression;
2. make an end of sin;
3. atone for Israel's sin;
4. bring everlasting righteousness;
5. seal up prophecy;
6. and anoint the temple.

Daniel's seventy sevens (of Dan. 9) is the age of the gentiles and will last 490 years.

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5. Review the following:

- Church apostasy (Rev. 3; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:3)
The apostasy will happen first.
- Regathering Israel (Ezek. 20 and 22)
After Israel is scattered, they will be gathered again into their land.
- Emergence of ten world rulers (Dan. 2 and 7)
These rulers have not yet emerged.
- Return of Elijah to prepare Israel (Mal. 4:4-6)
Elijah will return to restore the hearts of people to their ancestors.
Israel will return to a temple and sacrifice at it (becoming Orthodox again).
- Resurrection of the bride of Christ (1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:9)

Only the first two have occurred. The beginning of the end is beginning to happen now.

None of these events had occurred until the turn of the twentieth century, but now they are being fulfilled. How does this pattern change your appreciation for the days in which you live?

6. What evidence do you see that indicates to you the end is approaching?

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DISCUSSION

1. What point(s) in the videos were most noteworthy to you?

2. Compare and contrast **Matthew 24** and **Luke 21** by reading the following sections:

	Apostles' Questions	Asked	Answered in Matthew	Answered in Luke
1.	When?	Matt. 24:3; Luke 21:7		21:12-19
1a.	Signs it's about to happen?	Luke 21:7		21:24
2.	Signs of Your coming?	Matt. 24:3	24:9, 27-29	21:12, 25
3.	Signs of the end of the age?	Matt. 24:3	24:7-8	21:10-11
4.	What are not signs?		24:4-6	

Apostles' questions on hearing that the temple will be torn down (Matt. 24:3 and Luke 21:7):

1. When will these things (the temple's destruction) happen?
- 1a. What will be signs when these things are about to take place (Luke 21:7)?
2. What will be the signs of Your coming?
3. What will be the signs of the end of the age?



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.versebyverseministry.org/videos/revelation-study>

Revelation Study: Lessons 5D, 5E, and 6A

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4. Review the Bible's teaching on the coming of the Lord.

"You are our hope, joy, and crown when Jesus comes" (1 Thess. 2:19, 20).

"Be patient until the coming of the Lord, which is near. The judge is at the door" (James 5:7-9).

"Don't judge before the appointed time. Wait until the Lord comes" (1 Cor. 4:5).

"Jesus will come at an unexpected hour" (Matt. 24:44).

List some of the characteristics of this "day." What stands out?

5. Read **2 Thessalonians 2:1-4**. How would you describe the differences between the *coming of the Lord* and the *day of the Lord*?

7. Read **John 14:2-3**. In the video, we learned that:

Jesus is going to heaven (the Father's house) to prepare dwelling places. If Jesus goes, He will return to receive people to Himself, where He is in heaven.

This is distinct from the second coming, because at the second coming Jesus comes to the earth and stays. The coming of the Lord is called "the resurrection of the bride" in **1 Corinthians 15:51-53**.

Why do you think Jesus gave the disciples this promise? What purpose would it serve in the lives of all believers?

8. Read **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** and **1 Corinthians 15:51-53**.

The resurrection of the church from the earth ends the church age and opens the door for the final events of the age of the gentiles. In what ways will the sudden removal of the church likely affect the world?

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.versebyverseministry.org/videos/revelation-study>

Revelation Study: Lesson 19

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PRAYER

Ask God to give you the courage and faith to proclaim that Jesus is Christ, both with your mouth and with your life.



OPTIONAL HOMEWORK

1. Consider the following confessions of faith in Jesus. List who said them and what they said:

Scripture	Who confesses Jesus	What the person says
Mark 8:29		
Mark 15:39		
John 11:24-27		

2. Where in the New Testament are other examples of confessing faith in Jesus?

3. Read the Apostles' Creed as a confession of faith in Christ.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended to hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic* church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.versebyverseministry.org/videos/revelation-study>

Revelation Study: Lessons 20A, 20B, and 20D

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