

A Biblical View OF THE **END TIMES**

BARELY CLINGING TO HOPE

Week #26; July 5, 2026, 6PM

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BACKGROUND:

- In this series, ***A Biblical View of the End Times***, we're proceeding along a certain trajectory.
 - In one respect - as much as it works to move from the front of the Bible to the back of the Bible - we're doing that.
 - But from another **and more important** respect, we are layering key events in the big picture the same way Bible prophecy layers them:
 - We can see this approach in recent weeks: We looked at what happens when we die > then there is the Rapture and the elements of that > then the Bema Seat judgment and our rewards > then a review of the 24 Elders in heaven's Throne Room, and so on.
 - I am trying to present the issues of Bible prophecy in their normal order of events – at least mostly.
 - But as far as the actual content of God's Word is concerned, it may mean we have to jump around a bit to capture all the details in relative normal order.
- **That brings us to where we find ourselves - right now....**
 - I imagine most of you are in this study series because you want understanding about the End Times. You want clarity in places where you may have some confusion.
 - If you've been here for even a few lessons, you already know Bible prophecy is more than one-quarter of God's Word.
 - **Think about that fact this way:** God considers it important to tell you what's coming. He does not want you to be confused and ignorant. **Why would He?**
 - While we don't know **every** detail about the future, the Bible says a lot more about what is coming - and what we can expect - than most people realize.
 - This is a foundational concept - and truth! - in God's Word. **Amos 3:7** says:

"Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets."

- **Isaiah 46:10** adds to this. This passage says (and it is God speaking here):

"I declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and all My good pleasure I will accomplish.'"

- **A larger point of passages like these is this:** God's Word gives information, warnings, direction, and truth to encourage repentance - - and to prepare us for what is coming. God does not want us to be '**OF the dark**' nor '**IN the dark.**'
- That's naturally why some of you are distressed that the churches you've BEEN a part of, or ARE a part of, are not teaching Bible prophecy - - and if they DO bring it up, they often **minimize** it, **misrepresent** it, and **mishandle** it.
- You already know for yourself that this is **not** the way God wants such a large portion of His divinely inspired Word to be regarded.

NOTE: (And that's why I think) many of you – like me - are running around with one eye on God's Word and one eye on the news.

- You can see events taking shape that Jesus warned us about – you can see certain ideas and passions surging that will dominate during the Tribulation – you can see the greater church is going down the wrong path – and you can see many people would rather have a **casual** faith than a **committed** faith.
 - You know the time is short before Jesus takes His **true** believers out of here. All around, you can feel the tensions in the world rising, and the tensions in yourself also rising....
- **(But) I ALSO know some of you are discouraged. You're worn out, you're frustrated, you feel like you are crawling instead of running – you are exhausted.**
 - You're still '*fighting the good fight of the faith*' (**Cf. 1 Tim. 6:12**), but you're sustaining a lot of aches, pains, cuts and bruises in this struggle.
 - You've made the right choice to '*take hold of the eternal life,*' (**Cf. 1 Tim. 6:12**) and you've disciplined yourself to be focused on the long term instead of the short term – but it feels like your spiritual gas tank is down to fumes.
 - Every day, you're doing your best to '*run with endurance the race God has set before you,*' (**Cf. Heb. 12:1**), but you're getting spiritual leg cramps.
 - If you are honest, sometimes it feels like you're barely limping along. This doesn't feel like a 'race' as much as it feels like an 'obstacle course.'
 - You are starting to wonder if you can keep up this '*blessed hope.*' Sometimes you find yourself doubting '*the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ*' (**Cf. Titus 2:13**).
 - And - - - **sometimes**, in those vulnerable and secret corners of your heart (the ones you don't want anyone to know about) you are wondering if you can keep on keeping on.
 - You are feeling the pressures of your questions and the pressures of your various unfulfilled expectations.
 - Maybe you are even wondering if you've been misled in some way – or maybe you misunderstood something. And that gnawing concern saps your strength.

A. And that is why I need to set the stage here. I want to get us all 'on the same page.' I want to look at a past time when things were super rough! (yesterday....)

1. There was a time when corrupt world powers and a depraved world system had full control and final say over everything.
 - If this corrupt power didn't like something that was going on – they could shut it down....even viciously if they wanted to...
 - There was a price to pay for speaking the truth, especially if that truth confronted the choices of a depraved governing system. One could be penalized, persecuted, or put in prison. One could even lose their life.
 - To preserve their personal security, the people kept a low profile. They just went about their daily routines and tried to avoid any circumstances and confrontations which might backfire on them.
2. To make matters much worse, the religious system and its leadership wasn't doing **anything** to confront or expose these problems.
 - Sadly, many of the religious leaders were actually in cahoots with this political system.
 - Instead of speaking out against obvious corruption and overreach, these religious leaders often urged their followers to conform to government mandates instead.
 - Most of the prominent religious leaders were not properly leading the common people or teaching them the truth. They were much more concerned with their credentials, their institutions, and their image.
 - Important prophecies from Scripture were overlooked and dismissed. These things were plain, but very few religious leaders cared.
 - Instead - in the wake of short-sighted and errant ideas, heresies abounded - and they had infected the religious system.
 - The worship system of this time was radically split. Certain of its leaders were very liberal. Just about anything was OK with them, even if it blatantly conflicted with Scripture.
 - They wanted most of all to conform – and they felt affirmed when their ideas were accepted by secularism. They wanted to 'fit in' with the lost around them.
 - On the other side, extreme rituals were elevated over a right relationship with God. Within this second group, it was all about legalism.
 - What was important to them was elevating a system of "do's and don'ts." What was SO important to this second crowd was their buildings, their rituals, and so on.
 - But they had something very much in common with the more liberal first group - - they ALSO were threatened by any Scripture which confronted their choices.
 - So, as far as the entire general religious institution was concerned, its primary focus was on money, on visuals, and on preserving a certain system that made it feel proper and righteous - - even when it was not.
 - Important truth got lost in the middle. It wasn't getting taught, and very few people had a grasp of what was happening.

- Monumental events were about to take place, but there were two big problems: (1.) the religious system was clueless, ineffective, and out of touch, and (2.) political corruption was rampant. Personal ambition and tyranny had taken over.

B. I know this sounds familiar – and that’s the whole point. Things are bad now, but there’s ‘*nothing new under the sun*’ (Cf. Eccl. 1:9). They’ve been this way before.

1. It was in these conditions that a rare, powerful, and Godly man emerged. He was called ‘John the Baptist’ (and now you know the time I speak of....)

- John the Baptist was a rough and rugged character – a rare type of person, certainly.
- John the Baptist arrived on the scene in the ‘*spirit and power of Elijah*’ and he said what needed to be said (Cf. Luke 1:17). Like other legitimate truth tellers, he broke the mold. He was unconventional.
- He was most likely affiliated with a small group of Godly people known as the Essenes.
- This was a bunch that hung out in the remote desert wilderness near the Dead Sea - - in an area known as Qumran.
- This minority Godly group was ostracized and persecuted by the religious system because they pushed back on this institutionalized, white-washed, and ineffective institution. The Essenes spoke the truth.
- And so, the Essenes found close community and fellowship with like-minded people. There were not very many of them.
- But they were the group that had possession of - - and who respected and studied those documents we know today as The Dead Sea Scrolls.
- Because the Essenes studied the prophecies of Scripture responsibly, they properly anticipated the arrival and specific details of Jesus Christ.

2. We see all of this evidenced in the life and activities of John the Baptist.

- A time came when John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus’ ministry as a “*voice in the wilderness*” (Cf. John 1:23).
- His location of ministry, his message, and his coarse apparel make the case that he proclaimed the core beliefs of the Essene community to the masses.
- He embraced a sustainable insect diet long before today’s globalists did. He was noted for eating locusts and wild honey.
- John the Baptist was a strong man with equally strong convictions. He was blunt, and he stated the plain facts plainly. That’s what truth tellers do...
- He didn’t think twice about confronting the hypocritical religious leaders and calling them a “*brood of vipers*” (Cf. Matt. 3:7).
- He made the facts clear. He stated the truth about the institutionalized religious system that had become delusional and had gotten way off track.

- His straight talk and no-nonsense approach attracted truth-seekers. The people were hungry for the truth, and John the Baptist was delivering it. He had many followers and disciples.
 - He also confronted the corrupt **political** system of that time the very same way he confronted the corrupt **religious** system - - and as we will see, that got him into trouble.
3. It's important to understand that John the Baptist and Jesus were probably cousins. The Bible suggests their mothers were somehow related.
- Because the Bible states that their mothers visited each other, chances are good that John the Baptist and Jesus knew each other as they were growing up together.
 - Maybe they even played together as children – this is not an unreasonable assumption.
 - But when the time came for John the Baptist to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry, he did this because he had a right view of Jesus.
 - John said of Him, *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (**Cf. John 3:30**), John the Baptist grasped the main priorities and how things needed to be.

IMPORTANT: None of this was an act. None of this was self-serving. John the Baptist was a man of God who had a passion for proclaiming the truth and for living it out.

- His extraordinary ministry and exemplary character were affirmed when Jesus said of him that there was *"none greater"* (**Cf. Luke 7:28**).
 - To be sure, John the Baptist was the **real deal**. His character and his message showed he was a great man with a strong spiritual foundation.
4. It is difficult to know how much time John the Baptist had with Jesus Christ.
- There was that special occasion where John had baptized Jesus (**Cf. Matt. 3:13-17**).
 - John's character and humility showed clearly on this occasion because he felt that Jesus should have baptized *him* instead.
 - But in their adult years, it seems they had little face-to-face contact. As each of their ministries grew, it seems they had less time together.
5. As I said, John the Baptist's reputation for being a truth-teller inevitably got him into trouble with those that did not want the truth.
- We already know he confronted the broken and barren religious system, and he 'called a spade a spade.'
 - We ALSO know John the Baptist publicly confronted Herod Antipas for the king's sins (**Cf. Matt. 14:1-13**).
 - As I stated earlier, it was dangerous to confront the political system of that day with the truth.

- This had resulted in John the Baptist's arrest and imprisonment – and ultimately his beheading.
- We must understand that truth has never been welcome at any point in time. (And so) the **quality** of truth spoken is sometimes proportionate to the **quantity** of persecution received.
- This imprisonment of John the Baptist happened early in the ministry of Jesus Christ, so there was no opportunity for further contact between the two cousins after that point.

C. It's here that I want to start looking at John's reactions. It's here that we need to see ourselves in him. It's here I want you to personally reflect...

1. It is AFTER John's arrest that we learn of his questions and doubts about Jesus Christ.
 - In a desperate situation with his life on the line - in a time of great trial, stress, and uncertainty - John the Baptist faced gnawing and growing questions.
 - Reports of Jesus had found their way into John's cell, and news of Jesus' ministry had become a part of John's deepest frustrations.
 - Time had passed since that glorious baptism, and Jesus' ministry was now flourishing while John's had abated.
 - John's disciples fed him bits and pieces of information as they were able to. It's fair to say these reports reinforced the misgivings John had of Jesus.
2. You see, the ministries and activities of Jesus and John were very different.
 - It's not beyond reason to suggest John had certain expectations of Jesus. By this point – those things had ALSO aroused John's concerns.
 - ✓ For example, John's choices had set him apart from the crowd. Jesus' choices had blended him in with the crowd.
 - ✓ John the Baptist and his disciples fasted often, but Jesus and his disciples ate and drank with sinners (**Cf. Matt. 11:18-19**).
 - ✓ John performed no signs in his earthly ministry (**Cf. John 10:41**), but Jesus - and his disciples - performed miracles of every kind (**Cf. Matt. 9:35, 10:1**).
 - ✓ John lived reclusively, but Jesus was a very public person who was often surrounded by enormous crowds of people.
3. Now John was sitting in prison, but he was captive most of all to his own frustrations and disappointments.
 - It's not hard to imagine the various questions that may have gone through John's mind.
 - ✓ "If Jesus was **really** the Messiah - as John himself had announced - then why wasn't Jesus doing more?"

- ✓ “Why was Jesus not getting down to the business of doing more? Why was He not establishing His kingdom, and *“burning up the wicked with unquenchable fire?”* (Cf. **Matt. 3:12**).
 - ✓ “Was he (John) here in prison because he had mis-stepped, or said or done something wrong - - or was it because Jesus was really powerless to do anything about everything that was going on?”
 - ✓ “Was Jesus **really going to arrive** the way John had said he would?”
4. John the Baptist’s concerns eventually got the best of him, and he could not resist his mounting insecurities any longer.
 - He sent some of his disciples to confront Jesus and to ask Him a question.
 - ✓ *“Are you the promised Messiah or should we be looking for someone else?”* (Cf. **Matt. 11:2-3**).
 - ✓ (Let me put John’s question another way): *“Jesus, I expected something of you that you’ve not done. You’ve not **ARRIVED** like I thought you would. Things haven’t panned out the way I’d hoped. Have I misunderstood anything here?”*
 5. John’s question is a revealing one because it shows he had expectations of Jesus’ arrival that were unfulfilled.
 6. John wanted to know if he’d been mistaken. Was Jesus their **only** hope or was somebody else going to come along that was a better fit for the job?
 7. Was Jesus **really** going to take care of all these obvious problems, was He **really** going to fulfill His promises - - or what? Did Jesus really care about him (John)?

NOTE: John the Baptist’s question shows he was unsure, doubtful, weak, and worn down – the same way you and I have felt from time to time - - or how we might be feeling right now!

8. **Jesus responded.** He sent John’s disciples back to John with an answer, but it was not really the answer John the Baptist was seeking.
 - Jesus did not answer John the Baptist’s question directly. That question emerged from human emotions and human struggles.
 - Instead, Jesus responded with a spiritual reality check. Jesus challenged John to consider the evidence of His miracles (**READ: Matt. 11:5-6**):

“The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

- It’s interesting to note that all those miracles were prophesied in the OT. They were specifically prophesied as ones the Messiah would fulfill.
- The only one on that list that was **not** part of Scripture is the statement that *“the dead are raised.”*

- ✓ **BUT** - - in the writings of the Essenes (in the Dead Sea Scrolls) that John the Baptist had ALSO studied, it was stated there that the Messiah would raise the dead.
- Jesus **knew** John had studied those things, and so He reminded John of what he'd learned.
 - ✓ In the process – Jesus not only validated the content of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the convictions of the Essene community – but He also validated the ministry of John the Baptist.
 - ✓ Jesus called John's attention back to the things John was supposed to know. Jesus underscored the importance of studying and standing firm on Bible prophecy.
- It's why Jesus subsequently added, *"blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."*
- In other words, Jesus exhorted John to cling to the truth of Scripture - - even when it was hardest for John to do that.
- Jesus reminded John of focusing on God's Word when John's personal expectations of Jesus were 'taking some hits.'
- He did not give John a simple "yes" or "no" answer, but he left him hanging a bit. He emphasized the need to exercise DAILY and ONGOING faith.
- In short, Jesus presented a Scriptural reality check to John's **human** responses and feelings.
- Jesus put the spotlight on John's heart instead of his mind because John's heart was the seat of his faith – the very same way OUR hearts are the seat of our faith.
- Jesus reminded John that he had **all** the answers he needed for **all** the doubts and questions he had - - and **all** those answers were in Scripture.

D. Now - it's easy for us to play armchair quarterback here. It's easy to look in the rearview mirror and draw some casual conclusions.

1. We can say John the Baptist was wrong for the ideas he had, we can say John was being too presumptive about HOW and WHEN Jesus needed to operate, but – honestly - **we're no different than him.**
 - We expect God to work in certain ways too, and if God does not fulfill our expectations - - then just like John, we also get disappointed, frustrated, weary, and worn.
 - Some of us even get upset and we show a short fuse. We expect Jesus to perform – to ARRIVE – the way **we want Him to.**
 - We expect Jesus to come through for us when things don't happen when and how **we** think they should.
 - We see all the problems in our world as John saw the problems in his, and every day our frustrations mount.
 - We perceive the political corruption, we watch as depravity gains the upper hand, we see the truth of Scripture being diluted and ignored, we

know the institutional religious system is failing, and we see religious leaders being hostile to Bible prophecy and shallow with Scriptural truth.

- All of this is what John also saw - - and he felt defeated, doubtful, and discouraged.

2. Yep! - - we may not like to admit it, but we're **just like** John the Baptist.

- It's easy for us to think that if God is really who He says He is, then we have a right to expect something different from Him.
- It's why we worry when Jesus is not fulfilling the expectations we've placed on Him. We want Him to meet our tolerances, our views, and our ideas.
- This is especially true when we see prophetic events taking shape, when we see Scripture being fulfilled in our time, when we know what's coming - - **BUT**, when we have also put God in a box of our own design.
- We're **JUST** like John the Baptist. It's easy for us to expect Jesus to **COME when** and **how** we think He ought to....

E. What are the applications here for you and I?

1. First we're not always going to get the answers we want, the **WAY** we want them, and **WHEN** we want them.

- I feel it's likely that John died with some of his questions unanswered.
- That doesn't mean Jesus didn't understand John's fears, it doesn't mean God let him down, and it doesn't mean John's faith wasn't real.
- It means John was human, and because he was human, his **reactions TO** and his **expectations OF** Jesus Christ were imperfect – the same way yours and mine can be too.
- But in our fears and concerns, Jesus reminds you and I – the **SAME WAY** He reminded John the Baptist – that we need to rest on the assurances of Scripture.
- Yes, things are horrible in this world right now. Yes, we can see prophetic tensions ratcheting up.
- Yes, we can see everything falling into place for the Rapture - - but we **MUST** rest on the assurances of God's Word.

2. The second thing we need to be aware of is our natural tendency to let our circumstances overpower our convictions (LET ME EXPLAIN)

- John the Baptist, was **appointed and anointed** to prepare the Way of the Lord.
- He preached with passion and conviction that showed he knew the truth, and that caused many to repent.
- John was called by Jesus, "*the greatest prophet born of women*," so he was endorsed by Jesus (**Cf. Matt. 11:11**). We know John's ministry was legit!
- John was graced to baptize Jesus Christ. He saw the Holy Spirit as a dove come and land upon Jesus and he heard God speak, "*this is my beloved Son in Whom I'm well pleased*" (**Cf. Matt. 3:17**).

- Yet, despite all of what John was, saw, and did – despite his personal relationship with Jesus - there came a point where he where he faced profound personal trials - - - and that's when he doubted.
- IMPORTANT: There came a point where John began to question, to wonder, and - - he let his **circumstances** overpower his **convictions**.

3. Third, Jesus told us there would come a time He would come and receive us unto Himself.

THIS IS IMPORTANT! But - - He added that it would be at "*an hour you do not expect*" or as the KJV puts it, it would be at an hour we "*think not*."

(Cf. Matt. 24:44 / KJV): "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye **think not** the Son of man cometh."

NOTE: The Greek word for the phrase 'think not' or 'do not expect' is a very important issue we need to consider.

- It is 'dokeite' (pronounced **do-KEE-teh**), and it means to 'suppose,' to 'imagine,' or to 'regard.'
- It is used **only 10X** in the NT, and it essentially means to 'arrive at a conclusion' - - but this Greek term has a particular focus on **appearances**.
- The word 'dokeite' (**do-KEE-teh**) has an emphasis on what 'seems' to be the case. Let's consider the implications of that...

- Right now, there is a lot of bad news, there are so many examples of corruption and deceit taking over the world, and there is so much heresy and 'lukewarmness' in the church.
- There is so much horror, insanity, and devastation coming down the pipeline that perfectly aligns with Bible prophecy.
- All of this can cause us to question - as John himself did, "*Are you really coming, Jesus?*"
 - ✓ I mean, major wars are happening and more are pending....
 - ✓ Prices are high at the pump, and they could get a whole lot worse....
 - ✓ Cost of living is a burden, and we have newer and older leaders that keep stoking those fires with foolish policies that are designed to weaken this nation....
 - ✓ Truth is being squelched and we – CLEARLY! - have a two-tiered justice system....
 - ✓ Violent swaths of our society want to federalize abortion, perform genital mutilation on our kids, and advance a transgender agenda....
 - ✓ Socialism is on a major surge in our nation as more and more ignorant people have not learned the lessons from history...
 - ✓ Our three-letter agencies are using their powers to take out their political rivals and anyone who threatens their control....

- ✓ Across the board, our nation's leaders are abandoning Israel and coddling terrorists....
- ✓ Our world's leaders are attacking our food supplies at the same time they are strong-arming us to accept a 'vaccine' lie....
- ✓ Multiple economies are on the brink of total collapse....
- ✓ (And we find ourselves exclaiming): "What about this, Lord? What about that? Lord, it's scary times!"
- ✓ You begin to question - and to even doubt. We wonder, "Lord, are you going to leave us here?"

NOTE: But this is where Jesus' words come into the picture, "I AM COMING AT AN HOUR YOU THINK NOT." (Cf. **Matt. 24:44 / KJV**) - - - AN HOUR 'YOU DO NOT EXPECT'

- Increasingly, I don't believe that means a time when you are distracted - - like when your attention is being given to something else: like when you're focused on the car in front of you during heavy traffic.
- I don't think it means it's a time when you are trying to decide between two items on sale, when you are rooting for your favorite football team, or when you are ordering from the menu.
- **Bottom line:** I don't think it means a time when you are sidetracked, or you just aren't thinking about His return.
- Rather – and this is the **important point** - it is a time when we are tempted to be overwhelmed by our fears, by our doubts, by our insecurities, and by our questions.

NOTE: It's **THEN** we start to "**think not.**" It's **THEN** we begin to imagine or conclude – based on appearances – that we might have miscalculated.

- This is exactly the same thing John the Baptist struggled with in prison.
- You might be someone who has been greatly convinced of the Lord's imminent return. You've read and studied everything you can about the end times.
- You can't get enough of it. You even attend a lengthy study series about Bible prophecy....
- You've done your part to prepare the way like John the Baptist did - warning and sharing and working in the harvest fields, proclaiming "Jesus is Coming!"
- You've read, you've studied, and you have made your convictions clear that, "these are the last days"
- But now, your insecurities scream, "Are these really the last days? I'm starting to 'think not,' Jesus."
- It was during such a time when John was "**thinking not,**" that Jesus sent him a reply and he encouraged John to cling to the truth of the Scriptures.
- I believe God is wanting to encourage us the same way...that IF we enter a time we begin to doubt and to wonder and to "think not" – then THAT is the time we need to "Look Up!" for He IS coming...

My prayer for myself and each of you is we will stand firm on the assurances and promises of God's Word. It is made clear there that we ARE in the last days, that He is coming soon and imminently. He will certainly come at a time we 'think not.'

My hope with this lesson was to set a tone for the lessons ahead. We will start looking at the rise of the antichrist, and those events and issues that lead up to The Tribulation - - it is a time we are seeing the early dark shadows of even now.



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Solid Bread Community was started with a passion to teach the truth of God's Word – every part of it, as it was divinely inspired to be understood.

The rules are simple. First, teach what IS there. Don't pretend the Bible is not saying what it is saying.

Second, don't teach what is NOT there. Don't force a passage to mean something it really doesn't.

And – number three, if the Bible states it plainly, we should too.

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