

# Unraveling the End

## *A Biblical Synthesis of Competing Views*

—Unifying ‘One of the Most Divisive Elements in Recent Christian History’—

13-week series presented by  
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### A Proposed Solution of the Problems of the End Times

*“One of the most divisive elements in recent Christian history . . . few doctrines unite and separate Christians as much as eschatology.”*

*Christianity Today* (February 6, 1987; p-1-I)

~

*“Noë’s book just could be the spark that ignites the next reformation of Christianity.”*

James Earl Massey,  
Former Sr. Editor, *Christianity Today*  
Dean Emeritus, School of Theology,  
Anderson University

### The Essence of the Great End-time Fiasco

**Part 1)** Things that were supposed to happen didn’t happen . . . as New Testament expectations proved false.

**Part 2)** So the Church invented “delay theory” . . . in direct contradiction of Scripture (Hab. 2:3; Ezek. 12:21-28; Matt. 24:48; Heb. 10:37).

**Part 3)** God never revealed any “delay” to any of his prophets.  
*“Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.”*  
(Amos 3:7)

## The Essence of Divine Perfection

***The God of the Bible is the God of order and design.*** Everything God created He did so with a plan, purpose, timeframe, and timely precision. For those who have eyes to see, his guiding hand is evident in every part of his creation—from macro to micro, the largest to the smallest. This attribute of God has been called the stamp or fingerprint of divinity, or simply, divine perfection.

***The same God of perfection in physical creation is the God of perfection in redemption.*** (See Sessions #4 & #5).

As He did in the physical creation, the God of the Bible *foretold* and *fulfilled* his plan of redemption with order and design, and a plan, a purpose, a fixed and specified timeframe, and timely mathematical precision. That’s why the Apostle Paul was prompted by God’s Spirit to write these time-sensitive words: Jesus Christ was born “*when the **time had fully come** . . .*” (Gal. 4:4); that He died “*at just the **right time***” (Rom. 5:6); and “*who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given in its **proper time***” (1 Tim. 2:6). It is **God’s perfect timing** that compels a deeper look into the fulfillment of *his perfect plan*.

Everything else God promised and prophesied via his prophets regarding his plan of redemption (saving us human beings from sin and restoring our fellowship with Him) also happened “*at just the **right time** . . . in its **proper time**.*” This “Unraveling the End” series has presented the evidence, biblically and historically, for your consideration. Participants have seen how the original audience understood the one-and-only “end” proclaimed, its time, and its events.

### Why Is Precise Fulfillment Important?

***According to God Himself,*** the timely and precise fulfillment of prophecy is how we humans can know who the one true God truly is (see Isa. 44:6-8; also 41:21-24; 42:8-9; 45:20-22; 46:9-11; 48:3-6).

***This fulfillment was also the once-for-all-delivered and completed foundation of our faith*** upon which we are to build—that was precisely foretold by the prophets (Amos 3:7), expected by the apostles (John 16:13), and time-restricted by Jesus Christ Himself (Matt. 24:34; Rev. 1:1, 3 ~ 22:6, 10):

*“ . . . contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”*

(Jude 3)

*“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”*

(Eph. 2:20)

## **7 Reasons Why Your End-time View (or non-view) Is So Vital**

(See Session #1)

1. **How much of the Bible is involved?** “It has been argued that no less than two thirds of the content of the New Testament is concerned directly or indirectly with eschatology.”<sup>1</sup> Some experts estimate that 25 to 30 percent of the whole Bible is so concerned. So, we are not dealing with a fringe issue.

Fact is, your view or non-view of eschatology dramatically affects your understanding, misunderstanding, or lack of understanding of many other important aspects of the Christian faith. For instance, it impacts on points 2 through 7.

2. **How much salvation do we currently have?** The whole of the Bible is concerned with man’s problem and God’s solution.

The final outworking of that redemptive solution for those alive and those dead is what salvation and eschatology are both all about. But depending upon your end-time view, your answer to this question will vary from “some” to “most” to “all.”

3. **How much of the kingdom do we currently have?** According to your eschatological view, your answer will vary from: “none,” to “some,” to “most,” to “all,” to “all minus—some major parts.”

Fact is, *the kingdom of God was the central teaching of our Lord and at the heart of his earthly ministry*. It was also the very essence of New Testament Christianity.

Today, however, *the kingdom is no longer the central teaching of his Church*, at the heart of its ministry, nor Christianity’s very essence—an automatic “red flag.” *What has happened? What has changed?*

4. **What do you do with the modern-day nation of Israel?** Many believe that Israel has a biblical entitlement to possess the land promised them by God. What say you? Do they or don’t they? *Your answer depends on your eschatological view.*

They further believe that if we don’t support Israel, we’ll be biblically cursed, individually and nationally (Gen. 12:3; Zech. 2:8-9). Will we or won’t we?

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<sup>1</sup> R.C. Sproul, “A Journey Back in Time,” *Tabletalk*, January 1999, 5.

Others believe that biblical Israel has been replaced by the Church. Most simply don't know what to think, believe, or do. Or, they don't care.

5. ***It's the focal point of the liberal-skeptic attack on the Bible and Deity of Christ.*** “In seminary I was exposed daily to critical theories espoused by my professors regarding the Scriptures. What stands out in my memory of those days is the heavy emphasis on biblical texts regarding the return of Christ, which were constantly cited as examples of errors in the New Testament and proof that the text had been edited to accommodate the crisis in the early church caused by the so-called parousia-delay of Jesus. . . .<sup>2</sup>

It is called the “battle for the Bible.” And liberals and critics, alike, have hit Christianity at its weakest point—the embarrassing statements of Jesus to return within the lifetime of his contemporaries and the “failed,” Holy-Spirit-guided expectations of the New Testament writers that He would (John 16:13).

Consequently, in America over the past 50 to 100 years, we have lost half of our faith as seminary after seminary, denomination after denomination, church after church, and believer after believer have departed from the conservative faith.

6. ***It makes a difference in your worldview.*** Our forefathers in the faith came to this country under a particular, and a historically optimistic, eschatological view to expand the kingdom of God.

They believed the world would become a better and better place as it became more Christianized, and as each Christian took responsibility to do his or her part to help make this happen. Hence, they came and founded the great institutions of our country—the government, the schools, the universities—under Judeo-Christian principles—and Christianity became the moral influencer in America.

But 50 to 75 years ago all this began to change. Now, we've almost given it all away, and without a fight. And we didn't get pushed out by a more powerful force. We simply withdrew. Into the vacuum gladly came the ungodly forces. *Why did this happen? What can we now do about it?*

7. ***It makes a difference in your life and family.*** If you have bought into the popular ideas that the Christ will soon return and the world is going to end, these beliefs affect how you and your family think, pray, work, save, plan, invest, and commit or don't commit to do things in the present—especially things that have long-term payouts.

As someone once put it, “Your view of the future determines your philosophy of life.” And “*if there's no faith in the future, there is no power in the present.*”

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<sup>2</sup> R.C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 14-15.

Eschatological ideas do have consequences. And for most evangelicals, their worldview is this: “We are living in the ‘last days.’ So, why fuss, why fight?”

### **13 Lessons and Major Topics Covered**

Audio recordings and Power Point slides are posted on MPC’s website.

Go to [www.madisonparkchurch.org](http://www.madisonparkchurch.org).

Click on: “Podcasts & Media” in the column on the right.

Click on “More Media & Resources.”

The third panel down is “Unraveling the End.”

Click on “View More.”

These materials will be transferred from MPC’s website to [www.prophecyrefi.org](http://www.prophecyrefi.org) in May 2009.

01/08/09

[Lesson 1 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

Introduction: Defining the problems surrounding prophecy and how this subject matter defines our worldview, our theology, our choice of churches, our faith and our discipleship.

[Lesson 1 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

01/15/09

[Lesson 2 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

The Pre-Millennial and the A-Millennial views of “end time” prophecy.

[Lesson 2 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

01/22/09

[Lesson 3 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

Post-Millennial and Preterist views of “end time” prophecy.

[Lesson 3 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

01/29/09

[Lesson 4 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

Divine Perfection validated in Creation (Intelligent Design scientifically validated in the macrocosm and the microcosm).

[Lesson 4 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

02/05/09

[Lesson 5 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

Divine Perfection and the Appointed Time of the End (Scriptural confirmations of Divine Perfection in the Plan of Redemption).

[Lesson 5 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

02/12/09

[Lesson 6 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

Daniel 12: The Historical Setting and Defining Characteristics of the “Time of the End.”

[Lesson 6 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

02/19/09

[Lesson 7 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

The Intensification of nearness (re: the fulfillment of the New Covenant in Jesus) in the writings of the New Testament PLUS: (Beginning of 3 sessions re:) The Second Coming of Jesus/The Return of Jesus.

[Lesson 7 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

02/26/09

[Lesson 8 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

The many comings of Jesus in the OT and the NT.

[Lesson 8 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

03/05/09

[Lesson 9 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

The Olivet Discourse: The most dramatic prophecy of Jesus re: the “end of the age” (Matt. 24).

[Lesson 9 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

03/12/09

[Lesson 10 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

A. Jesus' most dramatic prophecy / B. Revelation: The most misinterpreted book of the Bible! (Part I).

[Lesson 10 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

03/19/09

[Lesson 11 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

A. Putting the Revelation in proper Biblical Context / B. The Contemporary Christ: The Jesus you need to know!

[Lesson 11 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

03/26/09

[Lesson 12 Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

A. Contextualizing the Book of Revelation / B. Resurrection of the Dead Ones (plural).

[Lesson 12 Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

04/02/09

[Lesson 13a Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

Resurrection of the Dead Ones (plural)—The four stages.

[Lesson 13a Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

04/02/09

[Lesson 13b Audio - Dr. John Noë](#)

Synthesis Solution to Four Competing Views—basis for the *next Reformation?*  
[Lesson 13b Power Point Notes - Dr. John Noë \(pdf\)](#)

## Toward a Solution of Synthesis

The field of eschatology is a complex maze of confusing and conflicting views in which no consensus has ever existed. This lack of consensus has led to major disarray and division in the Church. Premillennialists say the amillennialists are wrong. Amillennialists say the premillennialists are wrong. Postmillennialists say they are right and everybody else is wrong. Few scholars are familiar with and even fewer lay people are aware that there is another comprehensive view—the preterist view.

The purpose of this 13-week series was to present, study, and analyze the four major eschatological views of the historic, evangelical, and conservative Church, to determine their principal strengths and weaknesses.

As we have seen, this field of theology has been plagued by the traditions of men and unscriptural false paradigms. These have forced their proponents to overrule sound hermeneutical and exegetical principles to interpret Scripture. Consequently, three major dichotomizing hermeneutics and many unsound conclusions have resulted in a stalemate that has plagued Christianity throughout its history.

### **Fourfold Premise**

This solution of synthesis is based on the presenter’s completed Ph.D. dissertation, which was subtitled, “An Evaluation (and Synthesis) of the Four Major Evangelical Views of the Return of Christ.” His premise was simple, straightforward, and fourfold:

1. **God is not the author of our confusion in eschatology (1 Cor. 14:33, KJV). We are.** I assumed that it was not and is not God’s character or nature to have included in his Word any content that would create the amount of confusion, conflict, divisiveness, and/or ambivalence we see among Christians in this area of eschatology. Personal interpretations have “muddied the waters” for everyone.  
  
I further assumed that we are the ones who have misconstrued the whole thing, and that this impasse could be resolved—scripturally.
2. **Each of the four views centers on the return of Christ as the central, pivotal and controlling end-time event.** So get this one right and the others events will fall readily into place.
3. **Each view has principal strengths and weaknesses that can be identified through a scripturally disciplined approach grounded upon what the text actually says and does not say.** Eschatology is an area filled with problems caused by both additions and subtractions to the text.

These are necessitated by the traditions of men and will not stand up to an honest and objective test of Scripture. Yet more often than not, we are unaware of the weaknesses inherent in our own view, until someone points them out to us. They are blind spots. *And unlearning is the hardest form of learning.* I also knew I'd have to be both objective and gracious in exposing these weaknesses for each view.

4. **The solution would be a solution of synthesis—discarding the weakness, keeping the strengths, and synthesizing the strengths into one meaningful, coherent, and consistent view that is more Christ-honoring, Scripture-authenticating, and faith-validating than any one view in and of itself.**

Since each view has grasped a portion of the biblical truth regarding the end times, I proposed a synthesis treatment that would meet all hermeneutical and exegetical demands and not contradict itself. This was significant because no one had ever done this before—i.e., to the degree and scope I was proposing—and none of the four views themselves meet this criterion.

## **Recap of Strengths and Weaknesses by View**

### **Preterist View**

#### **Strengths:**

- Fully accepts the natural reading and understanding of eschatological timeframes and NT time and imminency statements, including those bracketing the entire prophecy of Revelation.
- Supports the 1st-century Holy-Spirit-guided expectations as the correct ones.
- Balances literal and figurative language for nature of fulfillment.
- Uses biblical precedent to explain the nature of fulfillment.
- Harmonizes time convergence of OT time prophecies with NT time statements and Holy-Spirit-led expectations.
- Recognizes that eschatology is connected to Israel and pertains to the end of the Jewish age.
- Affirms that God has always had only one, continuous, by-faith people.
- Posits a positive worldview, long-term outlook.
- Acknowledges that God's material creation is without end.
- Answers the liberal/skeptic attack on the Bible and on Christ, effectively.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Positing A.D. 70 as the time of Christ's "Second Coming" and "Return."
- A finality paradigm which limits the comings of Jesus to only two.
- Thus, A.D. 70 was Christ's final coming.
- Overly spiritualizes Christ's return, resurrection, and his kingdom.
- Enormous exegetical and historical burden for documenting fulfillment.
- Lack of attention in writings to the nature of post-A.D.-70 reality and implications for Christian living.
- Gross cessationism—many preterists advocate the annihilation of Satan and his kingdom and/or the cessation of the operation of angels, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the miraculous gifts in A.D. 70.

### **Dispensational Premillennial View**



**Strengths:**

- Strong interest in end-time prophecy.
- Emphasis on the dynamic role of Christ in the present and future affairs of humankind.
- Recognizes that eschatology is connected to Israel and pertains to the end of the Jewish age.
- Realization that, at least, one coming of Christ is not visible.

**Weaknesses:**

- Positing the time of Christ's "Second Coming" and "Return" as being very soon.
- Interrupting divine time frames without clear textual justification.
- Arbitrary use of gaps of time.
- Bifurcating passages of Scripture, including the book of Revelation.
- Interpreting by exception and specialized meanings—i.e., ignoring or changing the meaning of commonly used and normally understood words in the time statements.
- Postulating postponement of the kingdom of God.
- Postulating delay theory.
- Advocating a future 7-year period of tribulation.
- Inventing the "Rapture" idea in direct contradiction of Scripture.
- Identifying Daniel's 70th week with Jesus' Olivet Discourse.
- Advocating separate redemptive plans for Israel and the Church.
- Denigrating the Church as unforeseen and a parenthesis in God's redemptive plan.
- Advocating a future restoration of the old and inferior Judaic order.
- A dichotomizing hermeneutic based upon a false paradigm—i.e., the Israel-Church distinctive.
- Incomplete salvation and resurrection reality.
- Positing a negative worldview and short-term outlook for our present time.

***Amillennial View*****Strengths:**

- Idealist interpretation of the book of Revelation.
- Emphasis on the literal/unseen realities behind symbolic fulfillment.
- Recognition that the "last days" existed in the first century.
- The present reality of the kingdom of Christ.
- Rejection of the idea of a future kingdom.
- Attempts to honor both literal and figurative language.

**Weaknesses:**

- Positing the time of Christ's "Second Coming" and "Return" as being unknowable.
- Advocating ambiguity and uncertainty re: the understanding of eschatological prophecies.
- Insistence that the time of fulfillment cannot be known.
- Little interest in end-time prophecy.
- Reliance on delay theory.
- Adherence to an unscriptural "end-of-time" paradigm.
- Use of a dichotomizing hermeneutic based upon that paradigm.
- Bifurcating passages of Scripture, including the book of Revelation.
- Advocating a final return, final consummation (how many are there?).
- Incomplete salvation and resurrection reality.
- Numerous partial-preterist inconsistencies from failure to fully honor the time statements.
- Belief that the Jewish age, the Old Covenant order, and the law were completely fulfilled and removed, and that all Old Testament promises/prophecies were fulfilled, accomplished, and completed at the Cross.
- The New Covenant began and was fully in force at Pentecost—i.e. the full establishment of the kingdom/Church/New Covenant order was given, perfected, and fulfilled.
- The Church as the replacement of Israel.

- Claim that eschatology pertains to the end of the Christian age, or to a split fulfillment in time and disposition (Jewish age/Christian age) with a gap of thousands of years in between.
- Advocating a current intermediate state of disembodied existence in heaven.
- Advocating a future evil-less, utopian, and eternal state on earth for believers and not in heaven.
- Equating the “age to come” to being heaven or yet-future.
- A mixed positive-negative worldview.

### **Postmillennial View**

#### **Strengths:**

- Strong kingdom-society orientation.
- Positive emphasis and motivation for human effort to expand God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.
- Positive worldview, long-term outlook.
- Recognition of many comings of Christ.
- Many valid preterist understandings.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Positing the time of Christ’s “Second Coming” and “Return” as being far, far away.
- Insistence the world must be “Christianized” to a significant degree before Christ can return.
- Adherence to an unscriptural “end-of-time” paradigm.
- Use of a dichotomizing hermeneutic based on that paradigm.
- Claim that eschatology pertains to the end of the Christian age.
- Postulating two or more *parousia* returns of Christ.
- Postulating a final coming and last judgment, after which there will be no more.
- Numerous partial-preterist inconsistencies from failure to fully honor the time statements.
- Bifurcating passages of Scripture, including the book of Revelation.
- Reliance on delay theory.
- Insistence that the time of fulfillment cannot be known.
- Incomplete salvation and resurrection reality.
- Advocating a future evil-less, utopian, and eternal state on earth.
- Over-dependence on creedal authority.
- The “age to come” is yet-future

## **A Synthesis of Views**

**First and foremost**, the central, pivotal, and controlling end-time event contained in each of the four views—the “second coming” or “return” of Christ—is taken off the table of synthesis. It is a weakness to be discarded for the following reasons:

- “The words ‘return’ and ‘second coming’ are not properly speaking Biblical words in that the two words do not represent any equivalent Greek words.”<sup>3</sup>
- These two non-scriptural expressions are also un-scriptural concepts that will not stand up to an honest and sincere test of Scripture.
- They are to be replaced by the many comings of Jesus and the biblical fact that He never left as He said (Matt. 28:20). (See Lessons #7, 8 & 11).
- Hence, these two traditional expressions and concepts are inappropriate and that’s why the Bible (properly translated) never uses them.

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<sup>3</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1956), 69.

**Secondly**, the superiority of the **preterist view** over the other three views is simple and profound, but not sufficient in and of itself. It is the only view that fully accepts and honors the natural reading and understanding of Jesus' time-restrictive words and the intensifying imminency declarations of the New Testament writers. No other view can legitimately make this claim. It also documents how Jesus came "on the clouds" in age-ending judgment exactly *as* and *when* He said He would and exactly *as* and *when* every New Testament writer and the early Church expected—as they were led into all truth and shown the things that were to come by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; 14:26). It emphasizes the harmony of this precise past fulfillment with the literal, exact, chronological, and sequential fulfillment of Daniel's two specific and two general time prophecies—no interruptive gaps, no exegetical devices. These prophecies frame the end times and establish its historical setting and defining characteristic (Dan. 12:7).

Thus, everything happened "at just the *right* time" (Rom. 5:6) and "in its *proper* time" (1 Tim. 2:6). This amazing harmony and perfection of timely past fulfillment is God's stamp or fingerprint of divinity, or divine perfection—not only in Bible times—but also in the end times.

Yet while superior, the **preterist view** was found to be insufficient in and of itself. Two of its major identified weaknesses are, the preterist insistence that: 1) the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was the "final coming" of Christ. 2) The prophecy of the book of Revelation was exhausted in the events of A.D. 70. Therefore, the strengths of the other three views must also be incorporated with strengths of the preterist view.

From the **amillennial view**, was kept the idealist interpretation of the book of Revelation with its ongoing, timeless, and countless applications in human history. But these now follow, rather than precede, Christ's historic and literal coming in judgment and consummation in A.D. 70.

From the **postmillennial view**, was incorporated but reapplied its strong kingdom-society orientation, positive worldview, long-term outlook, and many comings of Christ—past, present, and future.

From the **dispensational premillennial view**, was retained its strong interest in prophecy and the current dynamic role of Christ in the present and future affairs of humankind (although this must now be reapplied per this synthesis).

Discarded were the identified weaknesses from each of the four views that did not stand up to this series' honest and objective test of Scripture.

**In sum**, this series has presented a new groundwork—or break-through initiative—for eschatological reform, consensus, and unity. Others can now build on these findings as we more readily come together to build a fuller and deeper understanding of our "once for all delivered faith" (Jude 3) and God's once-again demonstrated attribute of divine perfection in ***foretelling*** and ***fulfilling*** his plan of redemption.

### **Some Comments from Participants**

"I am enthralled with Divine Perfection—it is so encouraging and invigorating."

"The question for me now is how do I demonstrate the beauty of this in my thinking and life?"

"I probably will have to go over this study more than three times!"

"The best Bible study I have ever had!"

"This has filled in the gaps that have been open for so long"

"Very thorough, highly scholarly, top drawer presentation. Wouldn't trade it for anything!"

"I will never *JUST* read the Bible again.

“My faith is deepened. God blesses when we seek truth.”

“I now read and understand the Bible in a whole new light.”

“An eye-opener to me of our awesome Lord in his exactness of prophecy. I’m floored!”

“It has changed my whole outlook.”

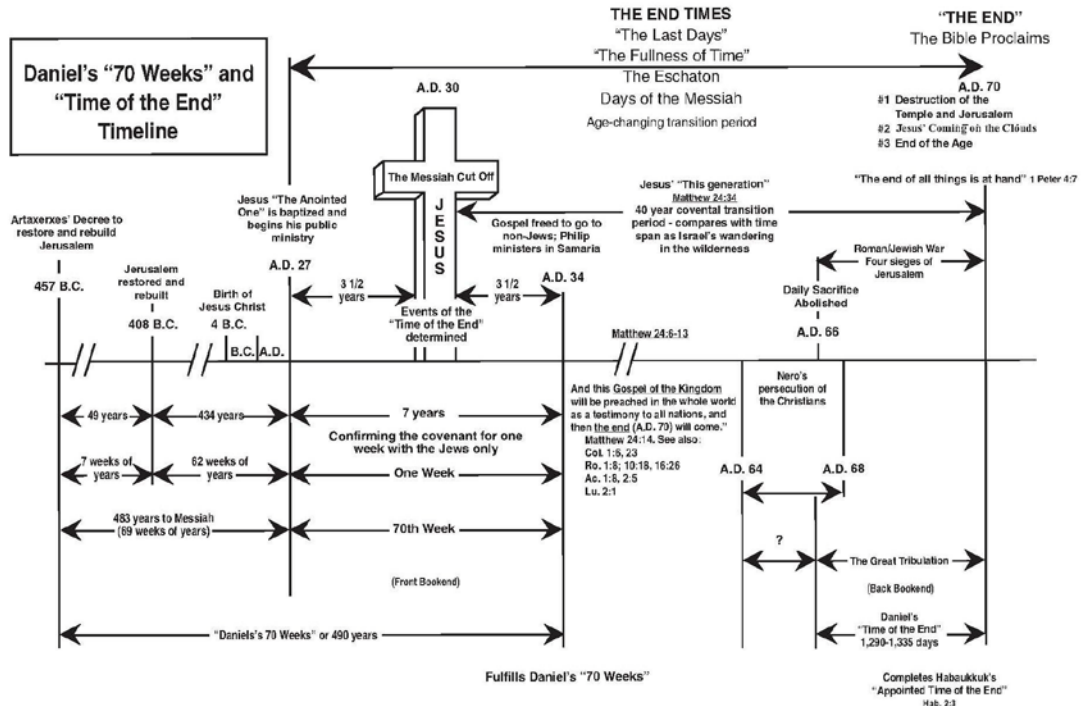
*“Personally, I express profound appreciation to our Pastoral staff for making this watershed experience a reality.”* —Rev. Dr. Ben Ruth, Facilitator

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(Jude 3)

Contending ... "for the faith that was once for all delivered (entrusted) to the saints"