

I. BELIEFS REGARDING END-TIMES PASSAGES

- A. We must recognize varying degrees of importance regarding biblical, end-time beliefs and themes. Here are three categories of ideas related to the end times: those of primary importance (essential doctrines), those held as our core convictions and those held as personal opinions.
- B. It is important to present the biblical message of the end times with humility and in a way that promotes unity, yet without compromising important truths. This is captured in the well-known saying, “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, diversity; and in all things, love.”
- C. In our zeal to be faithful to the Scriptures, we acknowledge that some end-time themes are best stated as opinions and suggestions instead of as statements that are immovable. Scripture allows for interpretative diversity concerning the specific details and timing of events.

II. ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

- A. These are truths that have been upheld historically by the Church as essential doctrine. They define what is essential orthodoxy as related to end-time themes. The truths below do not include all the important doctrines but only those pertaining to the end times.
- B. Authority of Scripture: The reformers have used the phrase *Sola Scriptura*. Our one source for understanding God’s plan for the end times is Scripture alone. We do not base views on prophetic or personal revelations. The only sure commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself.
- C. Second coming: The literal, bodily, second coming of Jesus to reign forever as King of kings.
- D. Resurrection of the saints: The physical or bodily resurrection of the saints.
- E. Heaven: Living with Jesus in the New Jerusalem on the new earth for all eternity.
- F. Eternal judgment: The punishment of the lost. We stand strongly against the heresy of universalism that teaches that there is no hell and that all people will be saved.

III. CORE CONVICTIONS VARY WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

- A. Core convictions differ in various ways as it relates to end times teaching, and that’s okay. We all have pieces of understanding and are ALL on a journey of discovering these truths. I think it’s important to keep a teachable spirit while we’re establishing what our core convictions are. As history unfolds, we’ll become more confident.
- B. Truth is never hurt by scrutiny, but rather it is confirmed. We must boldly challenge all ideas that we hear (with a kind spirit and in the right context). Be a Berean...
These were more fair-minded...in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Acts 17:11 NKJV
- C. My core conviction is a Historic premillennialism view with a victorious Church—this view includes the following:

1. The Millennium, a 1,000-year reign of Jesus on the earth with the saints (Rev. 20:1-6). I believe that the Church is to impact society with the kingdom, but I do not embrace the postmillennial view that society will be fully Christianized before Jesus returns. Amillennial believes in no literal 1,000-year reign of Jesus.
2. The Antichrist is a literal man who will be the most powerful demonic leader in history.
3. A rapture at the end of the Great Tribulation, which lasts 3½ years.
4. A futurist view of most of the prophecies found in the books of Revelation and Daniel. Compare to Historicist (through history), Preterist (fulfilled in past), and Idealist (all symbolic) views.
5. Global temporal judgments preceding the return of the Lord will happen as prophesied.
6. The abomination of desolation is the primary sign that Jesus gave for recognizing the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:15). It includes the image and mark of the beast (Rev. 13).
7. A falling away from the faith will happen (Mt. 24:9-13; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).
8. Eternal rewards and reigning on the earth with Jesus (Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; 22:5).
9. The salvation of Israel, the battle for Jerusalem, and supporting believing Jews is an important calling upon the Church.

IV. THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS FOR EVERYONE TO UNDERSTAND

- A. The book of Revelation reveals the glory of Jesus (Rev. 1:1) and His plan to transition the earth to the age to come. The book is called *The Revelation of Jesus* because it reveals His heart, power, and leadership in preparing the nations for God’s glory.
- B. One of the Father’s purposes in giving this book to the Church is to reveal the beauty of Jesus. It is secondarily a book about “events” in the end times. The main theme is not God’s plan but the glory of the Man behind the plan and His ability to fulfill God’s purposes.
The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John. Revelation 1:1 NKJV
- C. Jesus will judge wickedness and oppression to remove all that hinders love (Rev. 19:2). The Antichrist and the kings of the earth will declare war against Jesus (Rev. 17:14; 19:19; cf. Ps. 2:2). Jesus will war against them (Rev. 19:11). This will be the most violent time in history.
In righteousness He [Jesus] judges and makes war...¹⁵...He should strike the nations...¹⁹I saw the beast [Antichrist], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Revelation 19:11-19 NKJV
- D. Revelation gives us more information on the end times than any other book in Scripture. It was written to help God’s people endure and overcome in victory throughout history, especially in the generation of the Lord’s return to earth.

- E. The most controversial point in this course is found in my conviction that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation (in great victory and power). This differs from the popular pre-tribulation Rapture view that teaches that the Church will be raptured (some with this view believe it can happen at any minute). The Bible teaches that the Church will be raptured. The issue is one of when.

V. SYMBOLS AND STRUCTURE

- A. There are seven main symbols in the book of Revelation. The events and numbers in Revelation are to be taken in their plain meaning (literal) unless the passage clearly indicates that they are symbolic (Rev. 1:20; 5:6; 11:8; 12:1, 3, 9; 17:7, 9, 15-18, etc.).
- B. How do we know when a passage is symbolic? When the text clearly indicates that it is. For example, the angel tells John the seven lamp stands are symbolic of seven churches (Rev. 1:20). Daniel used some of the same symbols as John (Dan. 7:3-7, 12, 17; 8:4). Daniel prophesied of the Antichrist as the Beast with an evil empire (Dan. 7:7, 11, 19, 20-23) that was supported by ten kings seen as ten horns (Dan. 7:7, 20, 24; 2:41-42; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16).
- C. If Jesus meant it to be simple, then why did He make things symbolic? First, simple is not the opposite of symbolic. Symbols can be simple. A symbol, or picture, says much more in less language. For example, Jesus holding the seven stars (Rev. 1) says much more in a symbolic way than listing every individual truth related to Him tenderly upholding, directing and protecting His messengers.
- D. Like parables, Jesus used symbols to hide truth from the proud and unbelieving while giving deep insight to the humble and the hungry, because they will always search it out (Mt. 13:10-13; Lk. 1:52-53).

Jesus spoke... in parables; and without a parable He did not speak...³⁵“I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.” Matthew 13:34-35 NKJV

- E. The Four Parts and Seven Main Symbols:
1. John’s Calling to Prophecy About the End-Times (Rev. 1)
 2. Jesus Gave Seven Letters to Seven Churches (Rev. 2-3)
 3. Jesus Takes the Scroll (Rev. 4-5)
 4. Jesus’ Battle Plan (Rev. 6-22)

The Seven Main Symbols of Revelation 6-22:

1. **Dragon:** symbolic of Satan (Rev. 12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4; 16:13; 20:2).
He seized the dragon—that old serpent, who is the devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for a thousand years. Revelation 20:2 (NLT)
2. **Beast:** is symbolic of the Antichrist, who is called the Beast 36 times in Revelation (Rev. 13; 14:9-11; 17:3-17; 19:19-21; 20:4, 10).
3. **Another Beast:** is symbolic of the False Prophet, who is called “another Beast” just once (Rev. 13:11). Every other time he is called the False Prophet (Rev. 13:11-17; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image... Revelation 19:20 NKJV

4. **Seven Heads:** are symbolic of the world empires that persecute(d) Israel. The combined strengths of their wickedness will increase and emerge again under the Antichrist’s rule (Rev. 13:1-2).
5. **Ten Horns:** are symbolic of a future Ten Nation (or regions of nations) that will come into partnership to serve the Antichrist (Dan. 2:41-42; 7:7, 20, 24; 11:36-45; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16).
The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. Revelation 17:12 NKJV
6. **Harlot Babylon:** is symbolic of a Global Religious and Economic System that is demonically inspired and empowered by the Antichrist (Isa. 13-14; Jer. 50-51; Rev. 17-18).
7. **Woman with Male-Child:** is symbolic of the faithful of Israel throughout history that gave birth to Jesus, the Male-Child, who will rule all nations with a rod of iron (Mt. 1:1-17; Rev. 12:1-5). Satan wars with the rest of her offspring who are non-Jewish Christian believers (Rev. 12:17).
And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Revelation 12:17 NKJV

VI. TAKE A STEP BACK

- A. We have to see the Bible as one big story with a beginning and an end. Revelation brings the story of God to its greatest climax, where evil is defeated by good. It’s the story told over and over through movies and books. It all originates from God’s story.
- B. Revelation shows how evil brings forth all of its tricks to ultimately defeat good. Jesus also releases great power and glory. It’s not all bad, and it’s not all good. It’s the climax of both. BUT...good destroys evil. The book has been written. It’s final.
- C. Throughout the history of the people of God, hints of the story were given. As far back as Job.
- D. Isaiah chimes in, Ezekiel and Daniel get a big chunk. The disciples asked Jesus, “When and what will the END be like?” He gave more hints even then.
- E. John the Beloved gets the download. He gets the most of any of the previous ones. Revelation.
- F. We now have history, time, and the world wide web full of resource to study God’s story.
- G. We can begin to see more clearly and as time unfolds, it will become more and more clear.
- H. However...don’t be found not interested in the story. Know it. Be prepared for it.
- I. Jesus mostly warned of deception in that hour...not hardship. We must be prepared by the Word & Spirit.