

32. End Times Defined

- In this document, the "end times" will be defined as a period of time beginning with the rapture and including the Great Tribulation and the millennial kingdom and culminating with the new heaven and earth. The phrases "end time" or "end of time" are used several times by Daniel (Daniel 11:35, 40, 12:4, 9). Daniel describes a battle that will occur during the Great Tribulation, "and at the end time the king of the South will collide with him" (Daniel 11:40). This "end time" battle will probably occur toward the end of the Tribulation and will involve the antichrist. Daniel is told to "conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time" (Daniel 12:4). Later, in the same chapter, Daniel is again told that "these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time" (Daniel 12:9). The twelfth chapter of Daniel describes events that will occur during the Great Tribulation and beyond.

- The phrase "last days" is often used to describe the end times but it actually defines a longer period of time. The "last days" began with the first coming of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:2) and include the time leading up to the rapture (Acts 2:17; 2 Peter 3:3-4), the period after the rapture (Ezekiel 38:16) and the millennial kingdom (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1).

- Another important Biblical term to understand is the "day of the Lord". This phrase is used often in the Old Testament and New Testament to describe any time God intervenes directly and dramatically in history either to judge or to bless. God has intervened in this way in the past, and he will do so again in the future. There have been specific, past "days of the Lord" when God intervened dramatically to judge. For instance, the destruction of Egypt by ancient Babylon was called the "day of the Lord" (Ezekiel 30:1-4). The locust plague described by Joel was a "day of the Lord" when God intervened directly to judge ancient Israel (Joel 1:15). Many of these past days of the Lord are a foreshadow of the final, future "day of the Lord". The "day of the Lord" is often used in the Bible to describe the Great Tribulation, Armageddon and the second coming of Jesus Christ (Joel 2:31; Obadiah 1:15; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20). This term can also mean an extended period of time, beginning with the rapture (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4) and ending after the Millennium, when the old heaven and earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10). Joel refers to the "day of the Lord" as "that day" when "the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk... and a spring will go out from the house of the LORD" (Joel 3:14, 18). God's blessings during the millennial kingdom are described in this passage.