

Group Leader's Guide

And
Then

the End

*The
Completion of the
Great Commission
and Nine Other Clues
that Jesus is
Coming Soon*

Will
Come

Douglas Cobb

© 2021 by Douglas Cobb

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked CEB are taken from the Common English Bible®, CEB®, copyright © 2010, 2011 by Common English Bible.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. The “CEB” and “Common English Bible” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Common English Bible. Use of either trademark requires the permission of Common English Bible.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked GNT are from the Good News Translation in Today’s English Version, Second Edition. Copyright © 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by Permission.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked TLB are taken from The Living Bible copyright ©1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Micah Kandros

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Week One: He <i>Is</i> Coming Back.....	5
Week Two: Can We Know?	9
Week Three: And Then the End Will Come	13
Week Four: Clues from Israel	17
Week Five: Signs of Our Times	21
Week Six: What Kind of People?.....	25
Week Seven: No Eye Has Seen.....	29

Introduction

Thank you for downloading the *And Then the End Will Come Group Leader's Guide!*

This seven-week curriculum is a companion to the book *And Then the End Will Come* and the *And Then the End Will Come Personal Study Guide*. It is designed to help you lead a small group to explore and apply main ideas presented in the book:

- Jesus promised he would return to gather his people and establish his eternal kingdom.
- Contrary to what many believe, the Bible teaches that it is possible to know that we are living in the season of Jesus' second coming. As Jesus says in Matthew 24:33, "Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door."
- The Great Commission is nearing completion. By whatever finish line you choose—believers in every people group, the Bible in every language, or a body of Christ (a church) in very place—the global church is nearing the end of the race.
- Jesus explicitly linked his return to the completion of that task, saying "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14)
- There are other biblical clues—the regathering of Israel, the prophecies of Daniel 12 and Hosea 5 and 6, the prophecy of "the days of Noah" in Matthew 24:37, and others—that confirm the promise of Matthew 24:14.
- If it's true that Jesus is coming soon, those who belong to him want to prepare ourselves so that we can stand firm in these last days and be a holy Bride, "without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless," at the time of his return.
- God has promised amazing things for his people in eternity—things so spectacular that the Bible says no one can even imagine what they will be like. Looking forward to these things should help us be more enthusiastic about Jesus' return.

If you just need a curriculum for your weekly group meeting, you can use this *Group Leader's Guide* alone. If your group enjoys daily study in addition to your weekly meeting, they can use the *And Then the End Will Come Personal Study Guide* to direct their daily study.

The Leader's Guide

For each weekly meeting, this *Group Leader's Guide* offers

- A summary of the main ideas you want your group to understand
- A list of the key scriptures covered in the lesson

And Then the End Will Come Group Leader's Guide

- Guidance about disagreements or confusion that may arise from that lesson
- A proposed agenda for the meeting, including an icebreaker question, exploratory questions, and applications questions.

This *Group Leader's Guide* is just that: a guide. You are free to use or not use anything in the book. Particularly, the questions in each lesson are suggestions. Don't feel like you have to get through all of them, and feel free to choose others from the *Personal Study Guide* or come up with your own. The key is to make sure your group members get the main ideas.

The questions in this *Guide* and the *Personal Study Guide* are intended to stimulate deeper exploration and application of the daily scripture readings. In many cases, there are not "right answers" to the questions. I may have had answers in mind when I wrote them, but I find that others often see things I missed. In your discussion, be open to a range of answers. The key is to use the question and the discussion to guide folks toward the main ideas.

Each week's schedule begins with an icebreaker question designed to ease the group into conversation. If your group is comfortable with one another and easily moves into discussion, you can skip the icebreaker. Or, if you prefer, instead of using the icebreaker, you could ask folks to share something they learned from the week's study, something they didn't understand, or a question about the material.

The videos are designed to present the main ideas for each session briefly and clearly. You can view or download them from AndThenTheEndWillCome.com. Again, though, you are free to use or not use the videos. If you think they'll help you, use them; if not, use that time to go deeper into the Explore and Apply questions.

Preparing to Lead

As your group's leader, you'll want to read the entire book before the first meeting of your group. Reading ahead will help you see how the lessons fit together and understand how questions raised by group members may be addressed in later ones.

Each week before you lead, you'll want to read the chapters for that week and do the daily studies in the *And Then the End Will Come Personal Study Guide*. Even if your group isn't doing the daily study, doing those lessons will help you dig into the scriptures behind the concepts for that week and prepare you to lead effectively.

On the day of your group meeting, review the chapters and the questions in this Guide for that week's session, so that the material is fresh. Take a minute or two to decide which questions you want to emphasize, if there are any you want to add (from the *Personal Study Guide* or from your own imagination), or if there are any you want to skip.

Last but not least, be sure to pray for God to equip you to lead and to open the hearts and minds of your group to receive what he has for them.

As You Lead

Although it's not listed in the agenda, be sure to open and close each meeting with prayer. You might want to do the opening prayer and ask another group member to pray at the end.

As leader, you're the guide. Your mission is to help people discover and capture the main ideas, not to answer all the questions. Be comfortable with silence. People need time to think, and some need time to work up the courage to speak. Don't step in too quickly to break the silence.

When someone gives an answer from left field, thank them for their contribution, say something like, "That's interesting. I hadn't thought of that," and move on: "Anyone have a different thought?" But always be open to different answers and perspectives. You never know when someone is going to come up with something truly amazing.

People can get testy about their end-time views. You want to avoid arguments about things like whether we're already living in the Millennium or whether the Rapture will be before or after the Tribulation. Allow people to express their views, but always steer people back to the main ideas.

In your group you may have folks who are more mature and who know the Bible better, and others who are newer in their Christian walk and less familiar with God's word. Do your best to draw the later folks into the conversation and try not to let the former dominate. Your group may also include people who are an end-times enthusiasts. Be sure not to let them monopolize the discussion or steer it into controversial subjects. If necessary, speak to them outside the group time to ask for their cooperation.

The Big Ideas

If it's true that Jesus' return is imminent, we should be joyful and excited, even in the midst of the growing craziness we see around us in the world, knowing that our "blessed hope" is close at hand. And we should be all the more serious about preparing ourselves for his return, because time is short. As you lead, keep those two ideas in mind: prepared and joyful. If at the end of your study the members of your group are more excited about the things to come, and are committed to preparing themselves to meet Jesus, your group will have been a huge success.

And Then the End Will Come Group Leader's Guide



Week One
He Is Coming Back

Preparing to Lead

Week One focuses on Chapter 1 of *And Then the End Will Come*, "He Is Coming Back," which considers the many promises of Jesus' return and establishes our confidence that he is coming back. You should read Chapter 1 and complete the daily lessons in the *Personal Study Guide* before you lead your group.

Main Ideas

You want your group to capture these key ideas this week:

1. They can be extremely confident about God's promises.
2. There is overwhelming prophetic evidence for the return of Christ.
3. They should be eager for the return of Christ, because what he has promised for those who trust in him is far better than anything we experience in this life.

Key Scriptures

2 Peter 1:3-4

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Numbers 23:19

God is not human, that he should lie,
not a human being, that he should change his mind.
Does he speak and then not act?
Does he promise and not fulfill?

John 14:1-3

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again* and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Revelation 22:20

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Week One: Can We Know?

Acts 1:11

This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, *will come back* in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

2 Peter 3:3–4, 10 (TLB)

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

Be Ready For...

You might encounter these issues in your discussion:

1. Some in your group may be ambivalent about the return of Christ. Especially in the West, where life is safe and easy, it is hard for people to imagine how eternity could be better than the life they have (or hope to have). You’ll want to lead them to the scriptures that vividly present the amazing things God has in store for his people, so that they begin to look forward to those things.
2. People have different views about the sequence of events in the end times and whether some prophecies will be fulfilled literally or figuratively. For the most part, the ideas presented in *And Then the End Will Come* fit most of those different views. This week, and throughout this study, you’ll want to avoid arguments about the different views. Most of these different views share the truth that Jesus will come back and that his people will live with him forever in a new creation made just for them. When someone brings up a certain point of view, allow them to make their point, and then direct the conversation back to the points of agreement.

Discussion Guide

Ice breaker (10 minutes)

1. Describe an important promise someone has made to you. How confident are you that person will keep that promise? Why?

Video (10 minutes)

Explore (15 minutes)

1. 2 Peter 1:3-4 says that God's promises are rooted in his glory and goodness. When you think of God's glory, what comes to mind? His goodness?
2. Peter describes God's promises as "very great" and "precious." What makes them very great? How are they precious to you?
3. How are prophecies and promises similar? Are they different in any way?
4. In Revelation 22, Jesus repeats the words "I am coming" three times; the words come or coming appear seven times; and the last words of Jesus in the Bible, in Revelation 22:20, are "Yes, I am coming soon." Why? What's the purpose of that repetition?
5. Paul writes that the return of Christ is the "blessed hope" for his followers. What do those words, blessed hope, mean to you? Why will his return be blessed? Why is it our hope?

Apply (20 minutes)

1. Does the idea that Jesus may return in your lifetime excite you, or are you a little reluctant—or perhaps some of both? Can you explain why you feel the way you feel? Is there something you'd like to happen in your life before Jesus returns? Why do you think that will be better than his return? What might increase your excitement about the return of Christ?



Week Two
Can We Know?

Preparing to Lead

Week Two focuses on Chapters 2 and 10 of *And Then the End Will Come*. “Can We Know?” and “Only the Father.” These chapters look at the verses on both sides of the question, “Can we know when Jesus will come back?” and conclude that while we can't know the day or the hour, we can definitely know the season of his return. You'll want to read Chapters 2 and 10 and complete the daily lessons in the *Personal Study Guide* before you lead your group.

Main Ideas

You want your group to capture this key idea this week:

1. While the Bible warns against trying to predict the precise time of Jesus' return, it also provides numerous clues and hints about the general time—the season—of his return. Jesus himself said, “Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door” (Matt. 24:33).

Key Scriptures

Matthew 24:3, 14

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

Matthew 24:36

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Matthew 24:33

“Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.”

1 Thessalonians 5:1-7

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night . . . But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.

Revelation 3:1-3

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

Isaiah 46:9–10

Remember the former things, those of long ago;

I am God, and there is no other;

I am God, and there is none like me.

I make known the end from the beginning,
from ancient times, what is still to come.

I say, “My purpose will stand,
and I will do all that I please.”

Matthew 16:1-4

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

Be Ready For...

You might encounter these issues in your discussion:

1. Some in your group have been taught that we cannot know anything about the timing of Christ’s return, based on verses like Matthew 24:36 and Matthew 24:42-44. We want them to see that while it is true that we cannot know precisely the time of Jesus’ return (the day or the hour), we can know the season of his return. If you get pushback, ask your group to hold their concerns until you’ve had a chance to consider the evidence both ways.
2. Few are probably aware of the rich connections between the seven feasts of Israel and the life of Christ. It’s fun to talk about that, but do your best to steer the discussion back to the main idea after an appropriate time.

Discussion Guide

Ice breaker (10 Minutes)

1. Do you like to predict the future—things like sports, politics, investments, whatever? Are you good at it? Do you have a story of a good prediction you've made? Or a bad one?

Video (10 minutes)

Explore (20 Minutes)

1. According to Isaiah 46, God glorifies himself not only by accomplishing his purposes and doing all that he pleases, but even more by revealing beforehand what he is going to do. Can you think of some examples in scripture where God has done exactly that?
2. Why does God reveal through prophecy things that are to come?
3. Paul draws a contrast between two groups of people in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5. Who are the two groups? What is different about them? To which group does the warning, “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” apply?
4. In Revelation 1:3, Jesus warns the church at Sardis, “if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.” What do you think he means that they should “wake up?”
5. Chapter 10 of the book explains how Jesus fulfilled five of the seven Feasts of Israel (see Leviticus 23) in his first coming. Explain how he fulfilled each of those five. How might he fulfill the two that remain—Trumpets and Atonement—when he comes again? How might the phrase “only the Father” relate to the Feast of Trumpets? Do you think it's possible that Jesus' caution in Matthew 24:36 was also a hint about the timing of his return?
6. When Jesus says, “when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door,” he's pointing us to the “signs of the times” regarding his second coming. As a group, review the list of the Ten Clues on page 209 of the book. Is there one you're particularly interested in learning more about?

Apply (20 Minutes)

1. Having studied this chapter, how would you answer a friend who said, “Even Jesus said that even he didn't know when he was coming back, so we surely can't know?”
2. Are you living as if you expect Jesus to come back soon? What would you be doing differently if you were convinced Jesus was coming back soon?



Week Three
And Then the End
Will Come

Preparing to Lead

Week Three focuses on Chapter 3 of *And Then the End Will Come*—"And Then the End Will Come"—and explores the Great Commission and the promise of Matthew 24:14. It also briefly covers Chapter 9—"Two Questions, Two Answers"—which explains the complex prophecies in Matthew 24 and Luke 21. Be sure to read Chapter 3 and Chapter 9 and complete the daily lessons in the *Personal Study Guide* before you lead your group.

Main Ideas

You want your group to capture these key ideas this week:

1. That the Great Commission is about "the nations" and fulfilling the promises God has made regarding the nations throughout His word.
2. That we are rapidly approaching the finish line (or finish lines) of the Great Commission. Using Rick Warren's "Three B's" model, we're likely to have Believers in every people Group, the Bible in every language, and a Body of Christ in every place within the next few years.
3. That Jesus directly tied his return to the completion of the Great Commission in Matthew 24:14.

Key Scriptures

Genesis 22:17-18

"... through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Revelation 7:9-10

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Ephesians 3:2-6

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the

Week Three: And Then the End Will Come

Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 24:3,14

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

Be Ready For...

Expect to encounter these issues in your discussion:

1. Most in your group do not know what a biblical “nation” (*ethnos*) is, how many there are, or how close or how far we are from engaging them all with the gospel. Most have not been taught that the Great Commission is specifically defined around making disciples in every one of the world’s 12,000 nations.
2. Some may object that the Great Commission is about preaching the gospel to every person. You’ll want to agree with that sentiment while pointing out Jesus’ specific words in Matthew 28:19.
3. Some may object that there are more than 12,000 people groups in the world, or more than a few hundred remaining unengaged groups. It’s true that different researchers come up with different numbers of groups, and that some set the number higher, but the list published by Finishing the Task is based on the excellent research of The Southern Baptist International Mission Board and is very credible.

Discussion Guide

Ice Breaker (10 Minutes)

1. Have you been on a mission trip? Where did you go? Share a couple of memories of that trip. How did it affect you? (If no one in your group has been on a mission trip, ask them if there is a place they'd like to go and what they imagine it would be like.)

Video (10 minutes)

Explore (20 Minutes)

1. How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus told them, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"? How does that promise make you feel?
2. Did you know how close the church is to the finish line of "disciples in every nation"? Did you know that Jesus had linked his return to the completion of that task? Why do you think most American Christians are unaware of the rapidly approaching completion of the Great Commission? Now that you know, what's your reaction?
3. Why do you think Jesus commanded his church to reach "all nations" with the gospel? Why "all," and not just "many" or "most"?
4. God could have accomplished the Great Commission better and faster if he had done the work himself, instead of assigning it to us. Why do you think he chose to involve us in that critical work?

Apply (20 Minutes)

1. What are some specific ways ordinary folks can participate in the "sprint to the finish" of the great Commission? What role might God be calling you to play? What would you have to change to begin doing that?
2. Are you personally engaged in the effort to "make disciples of all nations"? If not, what might you do to get involved?
3. True or false: the kingdom of God is the most diverse assembly of people there will ever be. Why do you say that? How might you use that idea to start a gospel conversation with someone you know who has high regard for diversity?



Week Four
Clues from Israel

Preparing to Lead

Week Four explores Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of *And Then the End Will Come*, which explain several clues relating to Israel and the Old Testament Scriptures: the regathering of the nation; the abomination that causes desolation; the long and widely held view that biblical history will have a six-thousand year span, followed by a one thousand year sabbath; the coming 70th Jubilee; and the prophecy of Hosea 5 and 6. You should read Chapters 4, 5, and 6 and complete the daily lessons in the *Personal Study Guide* before you lead.

Main Ideas

You want your group to capture these key ideas this week:

1. The re-establishment of Israel is an amazing miracle and a key prophecy of Jesus' return.
2. That God apparently revealed the precise timing of the first coming of the Messiah to Daniel (Daniel 9) and may similarly have revealed to him the timing of the second coming as well (Daniel 12).
3. By all accounts we're at or near the end of 6,000 years of biblical history.
4. That Hosea 5 and 6 may point to the return of Christ "two days"—two thousand years—after his departure (his ascension) around 30 AD.

Key Scriptures

Deuteronomy 28:58, 64-66

If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name—the Lord your God— . . . Then the Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.

Deuteronomy 30:3-5

The LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.

Week Four: Clues from Israel

Matthew 24:32–34

Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

Daniel 12:11-12 (CEB)

“There will be one thousand two hundred ninety days from the time the daily sacrifice is stopped to the setting up of the desolating monstrosity [abomination that causes desolation]. Happy [Blessed] is the one who waits and reaches one thousand three hundred thirty-five days.”

Hosea 6:2

After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will restore us,
that we may live in his presence.

Be Ready For...

Expect to encounter these issues in your discussion:

1. Someone might object that the world is far older than 6,000 years. Rather than get in a debate about the age of the earth, simply point out that the clue in Chapter 6 is based on the Biblical age of the earth—the age that can be computed by working backward through the genealogies and history included in the Bible.
2. Some may want to debate about exactly what “this generation” means in Matthew 24:34. You can entertain that discussion, while emphasizing that whatever the exact answer, after more than 70 years we can be sure that we’re nearing the end of that generation.
3. Daniel 12:11-12 is an enigmatic passage with many possible interpretations, one of which is presented in the book. Allow folks to share their point of view, but try to avoid arguments about other interpretations of this passage.

Discussion Guide

Ice Breaker (10 Minutes)

1. Have you ever been to Israel? Describe the experience. What was your favorite site? How did visiting Israel impact you spiritually? (If no one has been, ask: Do you hope someday to go to Israel? What site are you looking forward to seeing there?)

Video (10 minutes)

Explore (30 minutes)

1. Read the prophecies of Deuteronomy 28:64-66 and 30:3-5. What stands out to you in these verses? How well have these 3400-year-old prophecies been fulfilled?
2. Ezekiel 36:22 says, "It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name . . ." How has God defended his holy name through the regathering of Israel?
3. Why do you think the world has so opposed modern Israel throughout its history?
4. What do you think Jesus meant by "this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened?" What period is described by "this generation"?
5. In the Bible, things happen in groups of "sevens." Name a few of those sevens. What is significant about the number 7? Why do you think God mandated that the number 7 would echo through the calendars of His chosen people?
6. The prophecy in Daniel 12:11-12 is mysterious and obscure. Why doesn't God make his prophecies clearer? What purpose is served by the mystery?
7. In your own words, what does the word "abomination" mean? Desolation? Do you think the Dome of the Rock fits those descriptions? Why?
8. Who is speaking in Hosea 6:1 and 2? What do they anticipate God will do? When do you think those things will happen? `

Apply (10 minutes)

1. Because of Daniel's faithfulness and righteousness, God was pleased to reveal amazing prophecies to him. What might God do through you if you were as committed as Daniel to a life of purity and obedience? What steps could you take to begin to move toward that?



Week Five
Signs of Our Times

Preparing to Lead

This week you'll be leading a discussion of Chapters 7 and 8 of *And Then the End Will Come*. These chapters consider four clues arising from our culture, including the increasing wickedness we see around us; the rapid rise in human travel and knowledge in our day, our frantic pursuit of peace and safety, and the intensification of false teaching and apostasy in the church in these last days. Be sure to read Chapters 7 and 8 and do the daily exercises in the *Personal Study Guide* before you lead your group.

Main Ideas

You want your group to capture this key idea this week:

1. That the Bible's descriptions of the condition of the world in the day of the Lord's return—increasing wickedness, travel and knowledge, desire for peace and safety, and false teaching and apostasy—matches our modern western culture precisely.

Key Scriptures

Luke 17:26–30

“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

“It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

“It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.”

Daniel 12:1-4 (NASB 95)

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”

1 Thessalonians 5:1–3

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people

Week Five: Signs of Our Times

are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Matthew 24:9-13

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

1 Timothy 4:1-3

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

Be Ready For...

Expect to encounter these issues in your discussion:

1. The section on peace and safety could be offensive to some. Some may think that the book overstates the world’s reaction to Covid-19 or the culture’s overall pursuit of peace and safety. The problem is that because we are immersed in the culture, it can be hard to see how much it is changing with regard to these things. You don’t want to argue with them but instead refocus on why God’s people should not be troubled or afraid (John 14:27).
2. Some may object to the idea that our western culture is like the “days of Noah” or the “days of Lot.” If anyone raises this objection, ask them to explain why they feel the way they do. Ask others in the group to respond with their opinions. You might wrap up that conversation by asking whether it’s true that direction of the culture is toward “the days of Noah” even if we aren’t there yet.

Discussion Guide

Ice Breaker (10 Minutes)

1. Think about how you personally have benefitted from the explosion of knowledge and technology in our day. What are some things that you've been blessed by that people 100 or 200 years ago would have regarded as science fiction?

Video (10 minutes)

Explore (15 Minutes)

1. What would you point to as the greatest moral evils of western culture? Do you see those things increasing or decreasing? Is the rate of change growing or slowing?
2. The book presents a number of examples of the increasing pursuit of safety in our culture. Do you agree with these examples? Are there any you don't agree with? Can you think of others that you've seen?
3. Is it hard for you to imagine that persecution might increase in the US in the coming years? Why? What do you think the church may be persecuted for? If this occurs, how should the church respond?
4. What are some examples of "destructive heresies" and "things taught by demons" (1 Tim 4:1) that are deceiving people today?
5. In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul speaks of something he calls "the rebellion." What would a rebellion in the culture against God look like? A rebellion in the church? Do you see signs of those things happening today?

Apply (25 Minutes)

1. It's easy to be discouraged by the declining condition of our culture. But it is also easy to get caught up personally in that decline. Are there any ways you see that you are being "conformed to the pattern of this world" as it sinks? What steps might you take to separate yourself from those things?
2. Have you ever experienced persecution as a result of your faith? Tell the story. How does the prospect of facing serious persecution in the coming years make you feel?
3. Jesus says in John 14:27 "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." How well are you obeying this command? Are there things that trouble your heart? Things that you fear? How can you overcome those things?



Week Six
What Kind of People?

Preparing to Lead

Chapter 11 of *And Then the End Will Come* tackles the “So what?” question: If it’s true that Jesus may be coming back soon, what does that mean to me? How should I be living? What kind of person ought I to be as I prepare to meet my Lord and Savior?

Because this week’s study is about preparing ourselves, we’ve combined the “Explore” and “Apply” questions, so that each question both explores and applies the scriptures.

Please read Chapter 11 and do the daily lessons in the *Personal Study Guide* before you lead.

Main Ideas

You want your group to capture these key ideas this week:

1. If it is true that Jesus is coming soon, it is time for his people to get ready for his coming. The Bible has many instructions about how we should be living in the days of Jesus’ return, and we want to take these instructions seriously, and apply them to our lives, as that day draws near.

Key Scriptures

2 Peter 3:10-13

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.* That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

1 Peter 4:7 (ESV)

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore *be self-controlled and sober-minded* for the sake of your prayers.”

Matthew 24:9-13

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, *but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*”

Week Six: What Kind of People?

Hebrews 10:23–25

23 Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Matthew 6:16-19

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

2 John 2:28

And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

Be Ready For...

There should not be significant disagreement or confusion about the ideas covered in this week’s discussion.

Discussion Guide

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

1. Tell us about a time when you prepared for some big event—a presentation you had to give, a special occasion like a wedding, or perhaps a vacation. What did you do to get ready? Why did you invest the time and effort required to get ready for that thing?

Video (10 minutes)

Explore and Apply (40 Minutes)

1. 2 Peter 3:11-12 says we should live “holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.” What does “holy” mean to you? “Godly”? What does a holy and godly life look like? How well are you doing? What one thing could you do or change to make your life more holy and godly?
2. Hebrews 10:24-25 says “Let us . . . not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Why is it important to be connected with other believers? Are you regularly meeting with other believers? How well connected are you to them?
3. The Bible teaches that God has equipped all believers with spiritual gifts for the good of our fellow believers. What gift or gifts has God given you? How are you using them? Are there opportunities for you to use them even more?
4. According to Titus 2, where does the power “to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age” come from? How does that work?
5. What are some things we will be required to stand firm against in the last days? As you think about this list, how well prepared do you feel to stand firm? What might you do to strengthen yourself to stand?
6. 2 John 2:28 says, “And now, dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame.” What does it mean to “remain” in Christ? How well are you doing at “remaining in him? What might you do to “remain” better?



Week Seven
No Eye Has Seen

Preparing to Lead

And Then the End Will Come ends with a look ahead at the amazing things God has prepared for his people: new, spiritual bodies; permanent victory over sin and death; eternal rewards; a new heaven and a new earth; and an eternity of intimacy with him. The Bible says these things are so wonderful that no one can even imagine how spectacular they will be. Read Chapter 12 and do the daily lessons in the *Personal Study Guide* before you lead your group.

Main Ideas

You want your group to capture these key ideas this week:

1. God has prepared astoundingly good things for his people in eternity.
2. God's word promises that the actual experience of eternity will be beyond even the things described in it—that “no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”
3. We should therefore look forward eagerly to the coming of Christ and, with him, our eternal existence.

Key Scriptures

1 Corinthians 15:51–52

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:42–44

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Galatians 5:17 (NLT)

The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat [bema] of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Week Seven: No Eye Has Seen

Revelation 21:1-7, 9-11, 22-27

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children . . .

1 Corinthians 2:9 (NLT)

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
and no mind has imagined
what God has prepared
for those who love him.”

Be Ready For...

Expect to encounter these issues in your discussion:

1. Many people have only a vague understanding of what the Bible says about eternity. Many assume that we will live forever as disembodied spirits in “heaven;” they have not been taught that we will have new, spiritual bodies and live on a new, physical earth forever. If someone raises this issue, you’ll want to steer them to what the Bible says about our eternal existence in 1 Corinthians 15 and Revelation 19, 20, 21, and 22.
2. Some people have not been taught that God has promised to reward us for the good works we have done for him in this life. They might object to the idea of eternal rewards on several grounds: that we don’t deserve them; that heaven is a sufficient reward; or that rewards are an inferior motivation for our good works. Again, if someone raises this issue, you’ll want to point them to what the Bible says about rewards in Matthew 16, 2 Corinthians 5, Hebrews 6, Revelation 22:12, and other scriptures.

Discussion Guide

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

1. Tell us about something you're looking forward to: a birthday, the birth of a child or grandchild, a vacation, a sporting event, or something else. Why are you looking forward to that thing?

Explore

1. Many Christians believe that we will live forever as disembodied spirits, but that is not what the Bible teaches. Why do you think so many people misunderstand this?
2. Can you relate to the struggle described in Galatians 5 and Romans 7? Is there a particular part of your life where you feel that conflict most acutely—where you “want to do good, (but) evil is right there with” you? How does it feel to know that the new bodies we will receive at the rapture will no longer have a sin nature—that the internal struggle will be over?
3. Does it make you uncomfortable to think that God will reward you for the good works you've done for him? Why? How do you reconcile your feelings with what God's word says about rewards? Does the promise of rewards encourage you to seek more ways you can serve and honor God?
4. What do you think John means when he says, “They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God”? Isn't that already true? How will it be truer in eternity?
5. Read though Revelation 21, making a list of the amazing things John mentions about the New Jerusalem. Is there anything that stands out to you?
6. Do you consider verses Revelation 22:12-16 to be a promise? What is the promise? How confident are you that it will be kept? Why are you so confident?

Apply

1. As you think about the various things we've discussed, are you more eager for the return of Christ?
2. What is the most significant or impactful thing you learned from reading this book? How has that affected you? What will you change in your life in response?

Week Seven: No Eye Has Seen