**Transcript**

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The Final Countdown - Prophecy 100624  
Mike Announcements and prayer – Community Breakfast Do you want to help prepare and serve? LifeGroups started and we joined the game night! What a blast – come on out on Tuesday evenings, whenever you can make it for community, prayer and games.  
So great to be back and thank you for all the Anniversary wishes. We had a great time away together – the older we get the more we appreciate every day God allows us to be here with one another. Thank you so much to Bob Magan and Nate Perez – both had great words for Joy Church. I listened to both messages and received so much personally.  
Our theme for the year is Discerning God’s word together and that’s what we have been doing and in this next series it couldn’t be more fitting.  
The final countdown song  
We are calling this series The Final Countdown – Understanding the End Times  
Intro – what is this series about? The end times, - eschatology, (the part of theology concerned with death, judgement, and the final destiny of the soul and humankind. We will be talking about the rapture, the second coming of Jesus, the tribulation, and all things Revelation.  
Let me just tell you this is very awkward – I haven’t prepared at all for this series. Mike has been preaching - I love my church for the last several weeks before Bob and Nate, and I have been sitting around eating bonbons just thinking we will get raptured before today – no preparation needed at all. Then we went on vacation to celebrate our 25th anniversary – we made it! We love celebrating each year because we know, like many of you, how hard marriage is. We know what we have walked through and the only reason we get to another year is because of Jesus and what he has done in our lives. So we have been celebrating and I haven’t been preparing at all, just going to wing it since I see now, the rapture didn’t occur yet………  
Well - How silly that would be. How foolish, and you all know I would never not prepare when I am going to be up here speaking to you all – yet some people, many people live like that every day.  
God put on my heart to do a series on Revelation, the end times etc almost a year ago and I keep putting it off. Arguing with God - Why? How could I ever preach on something many great preachers and people all over the world have different opinions on. Many people disagree on a lot of this and let me be completely honesty I do not feel like I am qualified or have the knowledge and understanding to teach you all. So many of you know way more about it than I do. I am so mindful that there are some of you are very new to the bible and Christianity, some of you are just checking out this Jesus we talk about every week, and some of you have been on this journey your entire life.  
We aren’t trying to distract you, confuse you, scare you. We just want to teach truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Pastors all over the world avoid teaching on this subject because every man, women, dog, cat, pet guinea pig etc has an opinion. So if you disagree with something I say over the next several weeks, Mike is available for all your questions and comments. He will be eating bonbons and have lots of time to discuss echotology with you ϑ Mike@joychurchnh.com  
There is a lot we don’t know. There is 7+ billion people who don’t know exactly how this all takes place and no one, let me repeat no one knows the day or time. Jesus reminds of that in His word. Acts 1:6-8  
Our job is not to know the timelines of what is to come but to testify, to witness of what has taken place so far. Not to speculate. Its like Jesus saying, that’s not your business, that’s the father’s business.  
We get to live with joyful expectation of the return of Jesus, not with fearful speculation of the events leading up to his return.  
So right now, upfront, I give you permission to dismiss anything I say over the next several weeks that doesn’t sit with the Holy Spirit inside of you. Let it go. I recognize we don’t have a perfect lens on this.  
Let’s all commit to stay focused on the main thing – Jesus.  
It is kind of funny that there are so many people focused on figuring out the last book of the bible – Book 66 when most of us don’t understand what the first 65 books mean. Most of Revelation is tying together the gospel narrative. It’s revealing – the revelation of Jesus Christ.  
There are MANY varying views on how End time events will occur: see photo on phone.  
  
Here are a few with some big words:  
Full Pretorism – Every End Time event in the bible prophesied has been fulfilled.  
Partial Pretorism – Some of what was prophesied has been fulfilled  
Futurism – All prophecies about End Times are yet to be fulfilled  
Amillennialism – There will be no 1000 year reign of Jesus on earth  
Pre-Tribulation – The church is raptured (taken) before a period of tribulation  
Mid Tribulation – The church is raptured 3.5 years into tribulation  
Post Tribulation – The church endures the tribulation  
Confusedasallgetousist – NO IDEA  
Understand today this is not a deal breaker. The Church hasn’t divided over this. If you disagree, its ok.  
Here are some things we all (most Christians) agree on – Jesus will return, Jesus will judge the living and the dead, Jesus Kingdom will have no end, We will be raised to life and given new bodies, All who believe in Jesus will have everlasting life in God’s presence, Those who reject Jesus will have eternal separation from God.  
It’s important we have to stay on Mission to share the gospel – The how and the when and what happens after. Our view about eschatology – the end times, our understanding of it affects how we live and that’s why it’s so important we talk about it here.  
As I was preparing (and yes I have been preparing for months) I really felt that The best place to start is with Prophecy itself– What is it?  
The definition of Prophecy – the foretelling or prediction of what is to come. Isaiah 7:14 – “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” That is a prophesy that has been fulfilled but was given, was written about 600 years before it occurred.  
Years ago, before I knew Jesus, I went with one of my friends to a fortune teller. I honestly don’t even remember what she said as it just completely creeped me out. It was like a house party and she went in one of the bedrooms and people could go up and see her and she would tell you something about your future. Let’s be clear that is not the prophecy we are talking about and that is all evil. Biblical prophesy. God fortelling us what is going to happen before it happens. Tarot card readers, Palm readers etc – all evil – stay away.  
Interesting facts: 62 of 66 books contain prophesy (Ruth, Song of Solomon, Philemon and 3 John are exceptions) but 94% of the bible contains prophesy  
31,124 verses in Scripture and 27% 8,352 refer to prophetic issues and then 22% of all prophetic verses refer to Christ’s Second Coming.  
333 specific biblical prophecies deal with Jesus’s 2 advents. 1/3 to His first coming and 2/3 to His Second Coming.  
Why is this important? If we value the bible, we need to value prophesy and do our best to understand What is to come in the future so we can live better today.  
Prophesy in scripture shows us evidence that God knows everything and is in charge of everything. He is never surprised by anything and whatever He says He will do, He does it all. Another words, Prophesy shows us God is sovereign and all his prophesies have been or will be fulfilled.  
Isaiah 46:9-11 “Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God! I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish….I have said what I would do and I will do it.” When we know the One who declares the beginning from the end, we can live every day with confidence.  
Prophesy promotes the bibles integrity - When we see the confirmation and perfect accuracy of biblical prophecy it boosts our confidence in God’s Sovereignty and His word. We see that we can trust every word of His word.  
In John 13:19 Jesus said to his disciples “I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I AM the Messiah” and in John 14:29 “I have told you these things before they happen so that when they do happen, you will believe.  
So not only did Jesus perfectly prophesy about the future, He was the fulfillment of prophecy. He was a descendant of Abraham and the tribe of Judah (Gen 12:3; 49:10). He came from David’s family line (Isa. 9:7) and he was born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2). His name was Immanuel; He was born of a virgin (Isa 7:14). He based His ministry in Galilee, spoke in parables, and did wonders among the people (Is 9:1-2, 6:9-10;61:1-2). He was betrayed pierced for our sins and crucified with criminals (Zech 11:12-13; Isa 53: 5, 12). After His burial in a wealthy man’s tomb, He rose again (Isa. 53:9-11).  
No one on earth can even come close to fulfilling the 109 prophesies fulfilled by Jesus and it brings the utmost evidence to the integrity of the bible (scripture).  
Prophecy protects us from false teaching  
Knowing what the bible says about the future protects us from being deceived. As much as God wants to put us under an umbrella of protection, the devil wants to keep us out. Reading prophesy tells us Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire – He is defeated and that helps us be victorious today and not accept Satan’s attacks. Amen  
Prophesy prepares us for the last days  
No only do we see prophesy fulfilled in the bible but we see there is more to come. It shows us God has a plan and there are phases to his plan and the next phase is imminent – it can arrive at any moment.  
Jesus told many parables illustrating the importance of being prepared for His coming. One story was about a master of the house who had been robbed. If the Master had known when the thief would come, he would have watched to prevent the robbery. The lesson is be prepared. Always be ready for the Rapture (we will get to that later) but it will be an unpredictable as a thief in the night (1 Thess 5:4)  
Constantly in our world today we hear about wars, rumors of wars, natural disasters etc.. So yes – all the things that are happening, they are signs, and we are told they would occur. But Jesus told his disciples to anticipate these events –that they would be signs that His return was coming (second coming)  
Jesus also tells us so many things so we can remember he told us they would happen. John 16:4 – “These things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.  
Prophecy gives us guidance for today (even though it is by nature focused on the future).  
We read in Revelation many times “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”. He is saying Listen guys – I have something important to say! Charles Dyer, a prophetic scholar says “God gave prophecy to change our hearts, not to fill our heads with knowledge”. Like everything he does and has given us, its to change us. He doesn’t care about who can spout out Scripture off the top of their tongue but has no grace or love for people. It’s more important to Him that our hearts are changed, that our behavior changes and attitudes change. That we forgive quickly, love abundantly, have mouth management etc… He gave us prophecy to help us anticipate what is coming and to equip us for living in the world of the end (Dr Jeremiah).  
Prophesy promises spiritual blessing  
The book of Revelation is the only book of the bible that promises a reward to its readers:  
Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near Rev 1:3  
Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book Rev 22:7.  
The bible is a guidebook that teaches us the sequence of events leading up to the return of Jesus. It’s for today – knowledge of what’s to come will benefit us when we study it and allow it to influence our choices for today.  
Jesus is coming soon! We are servants of the Most High God and He has given us work, that is critical in nature. When he comes, will he find us living wisely or foolishly. No one knows the day or time but each day, each breath is one day closer.  
Worship Team  
Summary of What’s Next?  
We are living in crazy times right now. You don’t have to look far to see the events that are taking place, unfolding right now in our lifetime. God has a plan for the future and for eternity.  
1) In order to look ahead we look back – there is a definite sequence of events and it starts with what already happened: Jesus came to earth, born of a Virgin Mary, he was fully man, fully God. He did miracles, he taught his disciples, he told them things that would happen and they happened. He was crucified, a horrific death on the cross. He took on all sin, past present and future, he suffered more than we can wrap our heads around, he died and God raised him from the dead 3 days later. That is referred to as the first coming of Christ.  
2) Next comes the church age. That is what we are living in right now. The time between the first coming of Jesus and the second time. He will come again. But He hasn’t yet. And we are all living in this time  
3) Next comes the Rapture where we will be caught up in heaven with Jesus and all those who have died that believe in Him. He doesn’t come fully to earth, we will be taken up to where he is in the air.  
4) After the rapture there will be a period of 7 years – a period of great tribulation. We will talk about that after the Rapture.  
5) And then the second coming of Jesus takes place.  
The Rapture and the Second coming of Jesus are not the same thing. The Rapture is when Jesus comes back to take us, his people back to heaven with him before the tribulation here on earth takes place. And then after the tribulation, the bible says he comes, Jesus comes with all of the people of God and with all the angels and sets up his kingdom on this earth. 2 separate events and here is where many people get confused. There are no signs for the Rapture. The Rapture – we will go into this next week. The bible tells us, Jeremiah tells about all the signs that are developing concerning the Lord’s return and then in the next breath he says, and nothing needs to happen before Jesus comes back to take us home to be with him. It can happen any time . The New Testament is filled with signs for the Second Coming. So, if there are signs for the Second Coming and the Rapture is 7 years before that, then we know the rapture is coming too!  
When we see that many of the prophetic things are happening – the regathering of Israel and the collection of the nations of Europe and we see all the signs of earthquakes and wars etc…natural disasters we know it is coming soon.  
Now Remember how we started – the bible is very clear that no one knows when. Matt 24:36 – However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.  
The 2 comings of Jesus are like bookends to the end times.  
That’s where I leave you today and the most important thing for ALL of us to get during this series is He is a good God and He wants us with Him forever and ever. We get to make the choice and when we do, there is nothing to fear. And in addition to us knowing and having confidence of that, He has a job for us to do in the meantime. Right now, right here on earth as we wait for Him and that is to tell others about Him. To testify to His goodness, to invite others to hear his word and to know the truth because the truth will set you free!.  
Pray