End Times
The goal of this study is not to promote a specific timeline perspective, but to highlight the significant events of the end times and provide understanding as to some of the various viewpoints that exist.

As you think about the end times, what are some of the major events and how might you place them into a timeline?
Teacher's Note: Teachers, you may want to sketch the various events in a timeline as people raise them. They may differ on when and where to place things. Watch to see how they interact with each other if they hold different perspectives.

Sometimes discussion of the end times can produce very strong opinions and reactions to differing views. Why might this topic evoke such reactions among people?

Why do you think there are so many differing views when it comes to the study of end times?

Titus 3:9-11 (NIV)
\[9 \text{ But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. } \]
\[10 \text{ Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. } \]
\[11 \text{ You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. } \]

At what point does a healthy theological discussion turn into a divisive controversy?
There will always be differences of opinion on some topics (especially this one), but when love and respect stop being conveyed in the communication, then we have lost perspective. At those times it is no longer about learning from one another or seeking truth, but about winning.

We will notice at those times it ceases to simply be a “topic for discussion”, instead it turns into something we are emotionally tied to and feel we must defend in order to feel good about ourselves and the other person. It becomes more “me” driven than “truth” driven.

Have you ever found yourself getting angry over a disagreement on an issue?
Why did it evoke anger or frustration?
Why were you not able to let the other person believe what they chose to believe?
Why were you emotionally tied to the topic?
Below are some of the major happenings in the last days

The Rise of an Anti-Christ Government:

Revelation 13:1-17 (NIV)
1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea.
And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. 2 The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.
The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.
3 One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed.
The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.
4 Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?" 5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. 6 He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. 7 He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. 8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast -- all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. 9 He who has an ear, let him hear. 10 If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patience endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.
11 Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. 12 He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. 13 And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. 14 Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.
15 He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. 16 He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, 17 so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Revelation 17:12-14 (NIV)
12 "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. 13 They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. 14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings -- and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."
Why did Jesus reveal the future rise of this government?
John was directed to write this revelation at a time when Christians were being persecuted by an evil, anti-Christian government. The believers needed encouragement to know that despite what the circumstances seemed to indicate, God was still in control and was working out his plan. It would also prepare believers to persevere when this future government comes to power. At a time when it would be easy for people to lose faith, God tells them to stand firm, knowing that these events have to take place to fulfill his ultimate plan.

Why do you think Jesus will allow his church to suffer in such a significant way?
Suffering is simply the result of living in a sin-tainted world.

**John 16:33 (NIV)**
I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

**1 Peter 4:12-13 (NIV)**
12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

Though times of suffering will inevitably come, Jesus promises to see us through the suffering and then use it to purify and strengthen our walk with him. There are many passages that talk about how God uses suffering for our benefit and his glory.

(Acts 5:41, Rom 8:17-18, 2 Cor 1, Eph 3:13, Php 1:29, 2 Thes 1:5, Heb 5:8, 1 Pt 1, 1 Pt 4:13, Rev 9:5)

**Tribulation**

**Matthew 24:21-22 (NIV)**
21 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again. 22 If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

**Daniel 12:1 (NIV)**
At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered.
Revelation 6:12-17 (NIV)

12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, 13 and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. 14 The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

What do you think is the purposes for this great time of distress?

Why do you think are we told of it in advance?

2 Witnesses

Revelation 11:3-12 (NIV)

3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. 6 These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

7 Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. 8 Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. 10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

11 But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

What is the purpose of a lampstand and how does it explain the role of the two witnesses?

In what way was this God’s last opportunity to show grace to the world?
The Return of Christ/ Gathering of Believers

Matthew 24:27, 30-31 (NIV)
For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.
30 “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NIV)
51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—
52 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 Thessalonians 4:15-17 (NIV)
15 According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

In what ways might these passages encourage us?

What excites you the most about this event?

What do you think our new bodies will be like?

1000 Year Reign of Christ (Satan Bound)

Revelation 20:1-3 (NIV)
1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.
Revelation 20:4 (NIV)
I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Isaiah 11:1-11 (NIV)
1 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. 2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD— 3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. 6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. 7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. 9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. 10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. 11 In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylon, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea.

If the thousand year reign of Christ is a literal reign, what do you think the purpose is?
It is possible that this now removes man’s last attempt at a feeble excuse as to their unbelief. Man will not be able to say that their unbelief was due to ignorance. They will have lived under Christ’s rule for over one thousand years, experiencing the benefits of his reign. Yet, even at the end of this time, they will still rise in revolt.

In what way does the Isaiah passage reveal “image rule” restored to the entire earth?
All believers will be fully restored to their ruling capacity as in the garden of Eden. We will be able to subdue the earth and bring it into order and peace as Christ reigns through us.

Satan’s Judgment

Revelation 20:7-10 (NIV)
7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
Why do you think God releases Satan at the end of the thousand years?

What does this ultimate rebellion against Jesus reveal about the sin nature of man?

Judgment: The Great White Throne

_Daniel 7:9-10 (NIV)_
9 "As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. 10 A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

(Matthew 25:31-32, 46 (NIV))
31 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

_Revelation 20:11-15 (NIV)_
11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

_Jude 1:14-15 (NIV)_
14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones 15 to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Do these passages raise any questions for you?
New Earth

_Revelation 21:1-4 (NIV)_

1 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. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 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."

What do you look forward to the most about the New Earth?

There are a variety of views as to how these events should be placed on a timeline. Below are three popular views. Read each explanation and then illustrate the events in the timeline provided.

*Teacher's Note:* The students do not have the blue items written in their notes. You might draw these out for them as you talk about the various ideas.

_Amillenialism (no-millenium):_ The 1000 year reign of Christ is figurative of Christ's reign through the church since the time of his resurrection, not a literal earthly rule. Satan is considered to be defeated and bound during this time, to be released at the very last days to deceive the nations. At the end of this time, Christ will come to judge the unrighteous and usher the church into eternity.

_Post-Millenialism:_ Christ will reign in spiritual sense through the church (not a literal thousand years) in some future time when Satan is bound or his power is decreased. During this time the gospel will advance around the earth and many will place faith in Christ. At the end of this era Satan will be released and the nations will be deceived. Christ will come to raise both the righteous and the wicked at the same time, judge the wicked and take the church into glory.
Pre-Millennialism: Pre-Millennialism teaches that there will be seven years of tribulation around which time believers will be caught in the air to meet Jesus. Depending on various viewpoints this rapture will occur either before the tribulation (pre-trib), in the middle of the tribulation (mid-trib) or at the end of the tribulation when Christ returns (post-trib). After the seven years of tribulation Christ will return to overthrow the Anti-Christ and establish an earthly kingdom for 1000 years along with the resurrected and transformed believers. Satan is bound during this time and earth will experience peace. At the end of this age Satan will be released to once again deceive the nations and then judgment will come.

What is the ultimate reason we are given these insights into the future?
The ultimate goal of these insights is to affirm for people that despite how things may seem in the present, God is in control and has everything worked out. This encouragement is to give us hope so that when difficult times come we will persevere and stay true to Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-4 (NIV)
1 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

2 Peter 3:8-10 (NIV)
6 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10 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 in it will be laid bare.

Why do you think God doesn’t tell us when Christ’s return will occur?

Why does he want us to live with a constant sense of his possible imminent return?
Why does Christ delay in returning?

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NIV)
Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Explain the two ways hope impact our lives:

1) Keeps you from Moving:

2) Causes you to move – get working:

If you knew Christ’s return was soon, how would it change your life?