

Sequence of Events Basic Timeline

Introduction

It seems to me that end time teaching gets into trouble when times are assigned to events, either as having occurred at a particular time or as still future. Dating events is hazardous and confusing, especially for those events and circumstances that we move to the future. This lesson will look at a basic timeline but one that is based on *sequence of events* rather than *dates*. In other words, what happens first, then second, then third and so on without any effort to put an exact date on any events. If we can understand an order of events it will help us avoid misleading scenarios that have been created out of natural thinking rather than the Scriptures to explain the close of the age. We will build this timeline based on the Scriptures rather than tradition or sectarian doctrine.

The Basic Sequence

We will begin with a series of verses from Paul that lays out the sequence of events for the close of the age in the broadest terms.

1 Corinthians 15:22-24 NASB

- (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.
- (23) But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,
- (24) then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

Paul is talking about being made alive in Christ, that is, the resurrection. He tells us that there is a particular order to this process and gives us three key points for our timeline: [1] Christ the first fruits, [2] those who are Christ's at His coming, and [3] then, the end when the Kingdom is passed to the Father.

From this we can also determine that “the end” comes when all rule, authority, and power has been abolished that is illegitimate; that is, any rule, authority, and power that is not in Jesus. The next couple of verses add further details.

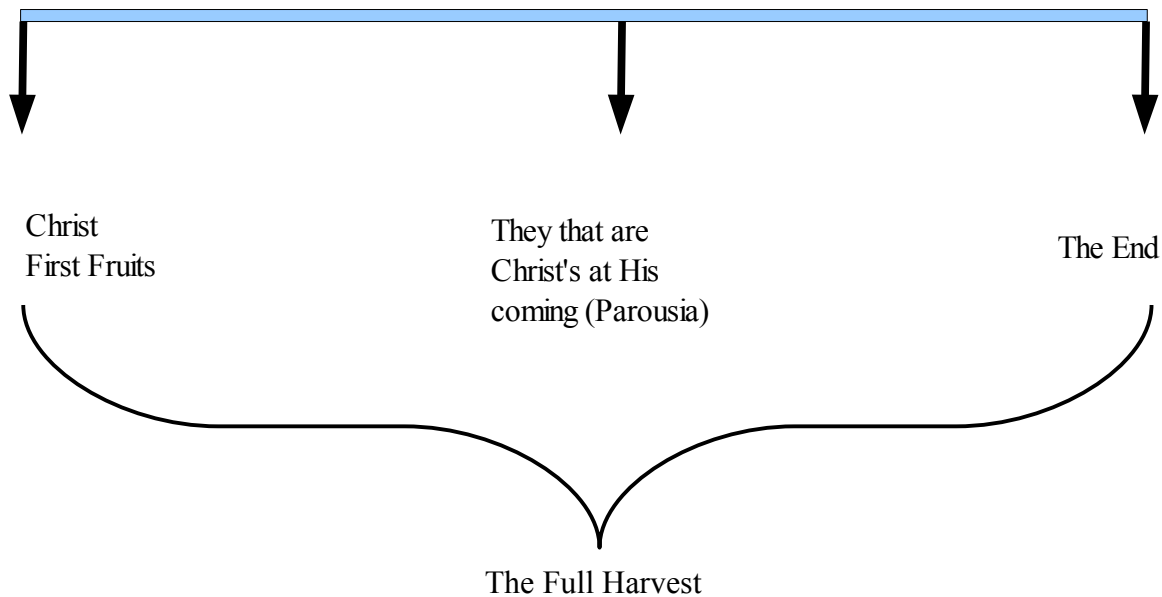
1 Corinthians 15:25-26 NASB

- (25) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.
- (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

Jesus MUST reign until all enemies are put under His feet with the last enemy being death. This isn't

an optional item; it is part of the unchanging will and purpose of God. This tells us that the completion of the purposes of God occurs at the end. All that God intended is accomplished fully under the reign of Christ over the Kingdom of God. When it is complete it is given to the Father by the Lord Jesus.

Let's begin a diagram that illustrates this and we can add to it as we add more Scriptures to our understanding.



The full period that is covered by this timeline is the time of the Harvest, beginning with the first fruits and continuing until the gleanings at the end. This gives us a different perspective on the last days because they actually started with the resurrection of Jesus and continue to the end when the Kingdom is handed over to the Father. This is important because we have, somehow, gotten the idea that “the last days” is a short period of time just prior to the Second Coming of Jesus. Paul indicates that “the last days” is a period of time in which we are now living.

The Harvest is pictured by the various resurrections. The first resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus and those who were raised with Him (Matthew 27:52-53) as the “wave offering” or the “first fruits” offering at the beginning of Harvest¹.

The major portion of the Harvest occurs with the return, the *parousia* or appearing, of Jesus when the dead in Christ are raised with resurrection bodies and those who are alive are changed into their resurrection bodies². This is called the First Resurrection (Revelation 20:5-6).

The End occurs with the Final Resurrection, which is at the Great White Throne judgment where all of the remaining dead are raised³. Paul had said that there would be a resurrection of both the righteous

1 Leviticus 23:10-12

2 I Corinthians 15:51-53

3 Revelation 20:11-15

and the wicked⁴, with this at the Great White Throne being, primarily, the resurrection of the wicked. This is also called the Second Death (Revelation 20:6, 14; 21:8). Everyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life is cast into the Lake of Fire.⁵

These three points in our timeline have been determined by God. Their sequence is established by the Father. All other events of the close of the age should fit within the timeline laid out by these three points, which makes it important that we understand these three pivotal events in God's order of events for the consummation of the age.

Christ the First Fruits

We will look at each of these three primary events in greater detail beginning with the first one—Christ the first fruits. Christ is specifically identified as a first fruits from the dead so that He might have preeminence in all things including resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:20 NASB

(20) But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

However, Christ alone was not the totality of the “first fruits” or “wave offering”. While He was the primary stalk of wheat in the sheaf, He wasn't the only stalk. It was a full sheaf that was waved before God as the first fruits offering.

Matthew 27:52-53 NASB

(52) The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;

(53) and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

Included in the “first fruits” resurrection are those who were raised with Jesus. Many of the Old Testament saints were raised from the dead (not just life like Lazarus but with resurrection bodies) and walked the streets of Jerusalem and were seen by many. Collectively, this company of Resurrection Ones, with Jesus as primary, are called the “first fruits” and they were entirely Jewish, that is, entirely made up of Old Testament believers. This marked the beginning of the Harvest of the earth and the beginning of “the last days”.

[The Last Days Defined: Because there is a general impression that the term “last days” has reference to a short period just before the Second Coming of Christ, we need to know that the term is not so defined in the Scriptures. The “last days” began with the first coming of Christ. In Hebrews we read: *“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”* (Hebrews 1:1-2 NASB) It is obvious that “in these last days” refers to the time in which the writer of Hebrews was writing.

Peter referred to the events on the day of Pentecost as the events of the last days by quoting from the prophet Joel: *“but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'and it shall be*

4 Acts 24:15

5 Revelation 20:15

in the last days,' God says, 'that I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;'" (Acts 2:16-17 NASB)

John in his first Epistle says: "*Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.*" (1 John 2:18 NASB) John was obviously speaking of the the time in which he was living.

Peter also said: "*For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you*" (1 Peter 1:20 NASB)

Based on these Scriptures we can see that the expression "last days" refers to time within this present dispensation from the First Coming of Jesus to His Second Coming. The phrase does not signify a short period just before the Second Coming as some would have us believe.]

The "first fruits resurrection" or "wave offering" is complete. It marked the beginning of the harvest and the start of "the last days". The Lord is waiting for the harvest to become ripe and then the earth will be reaped, which brings us to the second point on our timeline.

They that are Christ's at His Coming

This second point on our timeline is one of the areas where there has been much confusion by many of the so-called end time teachers. While a number of sectarian doctrinal positions have been promoted on this event creating the confusion, the Scriptures themselves are clear and straightforward regarding it.⁶

An open, visible, and audible return of Jesus is heralded by the three sounds associated with the *parousia*, the appearing, of the Lord:⁷

1. the shout of the Lord;
2. the voice of the Archangel; and
3. the trumpet of God.

These three sounds trigger the resurrection of the righteous. The dead in Christ are raised first and those who are alive and remain are changed into their resurrection bodies.⁸

An overview of the events of the Lord's return is presented in Lesson one of this series; however, we need to understand the *focus* of the events of the Lord's return. We have erroneously been told that He returns so that He can take us to Heaven where we will be with Him forever. This has been made popular by the Dispensationalists whose interpretation of end time events includes a sneaking into the world of Jesus to remove believers from the world before God pours out His wrath. They call this event "the rapture". That is simply not the truth—it is not what the Scriptures say.

6 See the first lesson of this series [Introduction to the Coming of the Lord](#) for an overview of the details of His *Parousia*.

7 I Thessalonians 4:16

8 I Thessalonians 4:17

When the Lord returns, He comes leading the armies of Heaven and it is for the purpose of executing judgment.

Revelation 19:11-16 NASB

- (11) And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.
- (12) His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and on His head *are* many diadems; and He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself.
- (13) *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.
- (14) And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses.
- (15) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.
- (16) And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

These Scriptures are filled with the power and majesty of our God. He is coming with armies to “strike down the nations”. This is certainly not a “sneak attack”. Jude makes it very clear about what the Lord is going to do when He returns.

Jude 1:14-15 NASB

- (14) *It was* also about these men *that* Enoch, *in* the seventh *generation* from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones,
- (15) to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

The armies of the kings of the earth and the beast are assemble against the Lord; however, the Lord destroys the armies with the sword that comes out of His mouth and the beast and false prophet are thrown alive into the Lake of Fire

Revelation 19:19-21 NASB

- (19) And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.
- (20) And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.
- (21) And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Then, the Lord establishes His judgment seat, which is for the believers. Paul told us that, “...we will

all stand before the judgment seat of God”⁹, “... then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”¹⁰

Our accounting is in terms of our reward. In spite of what some teachers have taught, the Scriptures make it clear that we all don't receive the same reward, there is quite a range of variance.

1 Corinthians 15:41-42 NASB

(41) There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

(42) So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*;

Paul contrasts the “glory” of the various heavenly bodies with each other and then says that it is the same way with the resurrection—variances of “glory”. Jesus spoke in various parables about servants giving account and the rewards for faithfulness varied between them.

2 Corinthians 5:10 NASB

(10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

This is not a judgment seat determining believing or not believing but is a judgment seat determining the “value” of our works, the deeds done in the body; that is, while we were alive in this life.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 NASB

(13) each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.

(14) If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

(15) If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

This occurs shortly after the Lord's return (at least, that is the way it appears to me). It is a prelude to the establishment of the physical Kingdom of God and the rule of Jesus on earth for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:4-6 NASB

(4) Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

(5) The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

(6) Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second

9 Romans 14:10

10 Romans 14:12

death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

It would appear that the highest reward is to reign with Christ during His thousand year Kingdom rule. This would explain some of the parables where Jesus gave as a reward to the servants the place of ruling over ten cities, five cities, etc.

Another result of the Lord's return and the setting up of the Thousand Year Kingdom is that Satan is captured and locked up for the duration of the thousand years.

Revelation 20:2-3 NASB

(2) And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

(3) and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

Revelation 20:7-8 NASB

(7) When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,

(8) and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

So, we know from all of this that the Lord's return brings judgment on all, the wicked and the believers, although the consequences of this judgment is different for the two groups. Afterward, the Kingdom continues for a thousand years and then the Devil is loosed for a final deception of the nations of the world, which brings us to our third point on our timeline.

Then Comes the End

We know that there is at a minimum of 1000 years from the coming of the Lord and the final point in our timeline (it must be more, because Satan is loosed at the end of the thousand years). Christ rules until all of His enemies have been dealt with completely—when all rule, authority, and power has been abolished; that is, all rule, power, and authority that is operating apart from the Lord, illegitimate authority is abolished.

1 Corinthians 15:24-26 NASB

(24) then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

(25) For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

(26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

When this has been accomplished including the abolishment of death, then the Lord turns the Kingdom over to God, the Father, for its continuance as the Everlasting Kingdom of God.

The handing over the Kingdom of God to the Father begins the final resolution of all things. Every

remaining detail is taken care and God, Himself, administrates from His Great White Throne the final cleanup.

Revelation 20:11-15 NASB

- (11) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.
- (12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.
- (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds.
- (14) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.
- (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Once these final details are taken care of then we have the completion and the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose and all things are made new.

Revelation 21:1-5 NASB

- (1) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea.
- (2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.
- (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
- (4) and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."
- (5) And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He *said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."