

Pastor Ray's Bible School #11

“An Eschatology of Victory”

(The Importance of Your End-Time View)

The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand
Until I make your enemies your footstool.
Psalm 110:1

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,
as the waters cover the sea.
Habakkuk 2:14 KJV

I. Eschatology: A Very Popular Subject

- A. “Eschatology”: the study of last things, or of the future in general
- B. Since the 70's, America seems to be obsessed with the subject of eschatology.
 - 1. Hollywood has given us many films on the subject. (The “*Omen*” series, *Sixth Day*, *Armageddon*, *Deep Impact*, *The Seventh Sign*, etc.)
 - 2. Books by authors such as Hal Lindsey, Dave Hunt and the authors of the *Left Behind* books and films focus on “end-time” events.
- C. In this session, we will consider what the Bible says about the end-times.

II. Four Things to Think About

A. Our eschatology, what we think is going to happen in the future, is critically important.

- 1. We live and make decisions based on what we think is going to happen.

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”
Proverbs 23:7 KJV

What we believe about the future affects present behavior!

- 2. Examples of things we do because of something we expect to happen in the future:
 - a. Attending school

- b. Saving money
- c. Buying an overcoat
- d. Preparing a sack lunch

3. A negative view of the future has a negative effect on our behavior.

- a. If we believe there is no real future in our present employment, our job performance will suffer.
- b. If a young woman feels her relationship with a young man is heading toward an unhappy future, she breaks off the relationship.
- c. If we know we will be selling or trading in our present vehicle, we generally won't spend a lot of money on fixing it up or improving it.

4. So it is with our spiritual life! If we truly believe that the Church and the Kingdom of God will fail in time and history, it will affect how we relate to world systems and current events!

B. Our view of the future is generally either positive or negative, optimistic or pessimistic.

- 1. If you are excited about your future, your life will be hopeful, upbeat and cheerful, even if your present circumstances are stressful and troubling.
- 2. If you are not excited about your future, your life will be marked by depression, anxiety and dullness.
- 3. This has a spiritual application regarding the success or failure of the gospel in time and history!

C. The prevailing view among Christians regarding the end-times is pessimistic.

- 1. Today, the majority view is that the Church ultimately will be defeated, and the real triumph of good over evil in history cannot take place on a worldwide basis. Therefore, the only real hope for the future is the physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2. Most believe that the devil's scheme of a one-world government controlled by Satan's servants, the Antichrist and his False Prophet, will succeed in history.
- 3. Most expect that the Church will eventually be threatened of its very existence, suffering pervasive spiritual decline and great tribulation which will cause many to fall away from the faith.

4. Even though the doomsday “prophecies” of some Christian authors and speakers have been proven false over the years, their books, tapes, films and ministries seem to be as popular as ever. This has happened before-

“The prophets prophesy falsely, and my people love to have it so!”
Jeremiah 5:31

5. There seems to be a morbid fascination with how bad it’s going to be for Christians in the future.

D. Has Christian pessimism yielded the field to the forces of darkness?

1. We must admit that the moral climate in America has declined.

2 We can see that Christian influence in the media and the arts has been minimal, and the public school system is a mess.

3. How much of our lack of victory in converting world systems to righteousness can be blamed upon our pessimistic beliefs about the future?

However, the “Big Picture of Scripture” Compels Us to Re-Think Our Eschatology!

III. Seven Reasons to Rethink the End Times

A. One: The Bible expressly warns us not to focus on the Second Coming.

1. After His resurrection, Jesus told us that the details about His second coming were in the “secret” will of God (see Session Seven of this School), so to focus on this subject is a waste of time!

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, ‘Lord, *wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*’ And he said unto them, ‘*It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.* But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth’...And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, ‘Ye men of Galilee, *why stand ye gazing up into heaven?* This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.’”

Acts 1:6-8; 10-11 KJV

2. Jesus Himself told us He doesn’t know!

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

Matt 24:36 KJV

3. Paul the Apostle also confirms this view:

“...Regarding the times or seasons, *you have no need that I write you...*”
1 Thessalonians 5:1

4. Isn't it fair to say that modern Christianity has focused on the things we shouldn't and failed to focus on “making disciples”? (Matt. 28:18-20)

B. Two: Fanatical focus on the Second Coming minimizes the impact of the First.

1. In the prevailing (pessimistic) view:

- a. Jesus will defeat the devil at the *Second* coming.
- b. The church will be made triumphant at the *Second* coming.
- c. The power of God will be manifested at the *Second* coming.
- d. The world will see the glory of God at the *Second* coming.

2. A re-reading of the Gospels alone will reveal that all four of these things were accomplished at the *first* coming, and the Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is to “reign in this life” through faith! (Romans 5:17)

3. In the letters to all seven churches in the Book of Revelation, (written to churches that existed at the time), and once at the very end of the Bible, we see that absolutely nothing is promised except to overcomers!!!

“to him who *overcomes...*”
Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7

4. The central focus of scripture is the First Coming, not the Second!!!

C. Three: The pessimistic view frustrates God's revealed will for man.

1. There are two primary expressions of God's will for man:

- a) The Old Testament expression regarding natural man, called the *Dominion Mandate*
- b) The New Testament expression for spiritual man, called the *Great Commission*

2. These are two ways of saying the same thing: It was the will of God, in creating man, to rule His creation through delegated authority!!!

3. To hold a pessimistic view of the future is to believe that God's (sovereign or decretive) will can be frustrated by the power of the devil and/or the disobedience of man...a "low" view of the power of God.

4. Do we really want to believe that God, Who allowed failure "in Adam," would allow failure "in Christ?" Do we want to believe that after all God did for man in Christ, He would be unable to work out a worldwide victory for redeemed man?

D. Four: The pessimistic view sees the church as a loser in history.

1. The basic text for our study is the most quoted verse in scripture.

"The Lord said unto my Lord, 'Sit Thou at my right hand until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool.' "

Psalm 110:1

A. This is a Messianic prophecy, seen from a post-resurrection perspective!

b. "Until" is a "time-word", and means that Messiah will sit at God's right hand "until" His enemies are defeated!

2. This prophecy is quoted, in one form or another, by Christ Himself (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43), by Peter (Acts 2:33-35 & 3:19-21) and the writer of Hebrews. (Hebrews 1:12: 10:13)

3. These scriptures, which predict *victory for the church in history*, reinforce the doctrine of Christ's return for a "glorious" church (Ephesians 5:25-27), the opposite of the pessimistic view of a backslidden, defeated, apostate church at the Second Coming!

4. This also enforces the decrees of God found in Numbers 14:20-21, Isaiah 11:9, Habakkuk 2:14, Isaiah 60:2 (spoken in the midst of spiritual decline), that the "glory of the Lord" would "cover the earth!"

5. If the church is the body of Christ, and the "feet" are in the "body", surely Psalm 110:1 means that the enemies of Christ will be made a "footstool" as the church subdues them!

6. Do we really want to believe that God restored man's authority in Christ and commissioned the church to disciple the nations knowing that we would lose???

E. Five: The pessimistic view makes the ministry of the Holy Spirit a failure.

1. It's unthinkable that God the Father failed in history. It's unthinkable that the Son of God failed in history. And yet, the prevailing view today fails to understand that if their pessimistic view proves correct, the ministry of the Holy Spirit will ultimately fail in history.
2. If the pessimistic view is true, then Jesus was incorrect when He said, "'It is *better* for you that I go away...else the Comforter will not come...'" (John 16:7)
 - a. (NAS) "...to your advantage..."
 - b. (KJV) "...expedient..."
 - c. (NIV) "...for your good..."
3. The majority of the church in America does not believe Jesus was correct. We say the opposite...it's to our advantage, it's expedient, it's for our good that Christ be here *bodily*, rather than that we only have the Holy Spirit!

F. Six: The pessimistic view replaces God's *covenants* with *dispensations*.

1. For over 1800 years, the Orthodox Church understood that God dealt with man on the basis of covenants.
2. The last 150 years, the "dispensational view" has largely replaced Covenant Theology, and so the doctrines of cessation have prevailed in the minds of many.
 - a. The Old Testament has little or nothing to say to us today; it's been displaced by the New.
 - b. There's no connection between Israel and the Church, so God is dealing with these two "entities" in different ways.
 - c. The gifts of the New Testament have ceased.
 - d. The ministries of the apostle and the prophet have ceased.
3. The displacement of covenantal understanding has produced the doctrines of defeat so readily accepted today. History is seen as a series of "failures" or methodologies that God used for a season, then "dispensed with" upon their failure.

G. Seven: The prevailing view believes in a “secret” Second Coming that, if true, gives unauthorized relief to the skeptic.

1. In the prevailing view of our day, Christ can come at “any minute” and catch all believers up into the air, leaving the world to wonder how to explain their disappearance.
2. A “time gap” ensues, during which the world will have another opportunity or chance to believe the Gospel and be saved. Indeed, many will be saved (especially in Israel).
3. This scenario begs the question, “Where does the Bible authorize a ‘second chance’ for unbelievers after the return of Christ?”

a. Did Jesus ever hint at such a reprieve?

b. Would a worldwide demonstration of God’s power by such a dramatic “sign” be compatible with what Scripture teaches about the Cross, and how men must believe without the benefit of “signs”? (Matthew 16:4; Mark 8:12; Luke 11:29) Wouldn’t the instantaneous disappearance of millions of Christians around the world would be the most spectacular “sign” in the history of mankind!

4. Wouldn’t the skeptic be justified to say to the church,

“Tell you what...I don’t believe you...But here’s what I will do. IF you are right, there will be a worldwide disappearance of millions of professing Christians, right? Then I’ll just wait to see if it happens...Then, according to what you say, I’ll have time to believe. Isn’t that what your teaching implies?”

5. This one argument alone ought to convince any reasonable person that this couldn’t possibly be consistent with God’s Word and the message of the Gospel!!!
6. There is really no scriptural warrant for a “secret” second coming that precedes a “public” third coming.

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*”

Acts 1: 9-11 KJV

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”
Hebrews 9:28 KJV

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”
Colossians 3:4 KJV

7. The main scripture used as a proof text regarding a “secret” coming contains language that calls such an interpretation into question.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven *with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God:* (quotes Psalm 47:5 and sounds *anything* but “secret”!)
and the dead in Christ shall rise first:
Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,
to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”
I Thessalonians 4: 16-17 KJV

II. Conclusion: Seven Benefits of Adopting an Eschatology of Victory

1. Produces a vibrant faith and hope that the gospel will ultimately prevail in the earth before the return of Christ, and the glory of the Lord will “cover the earth as the waters cover the sea”.
2. Produces a vibrant faith and hope that the church of Jesus Christ will victoriously prevail over His enemies and provide a model of true holiness and righteousness before God comes to judge the world
3. Brings the hearts and minds of God’s people back into harmony with the prevailing view of the church prior to the 1800s, which was unanimously and universally optimistic!
4. Promotes the “prophetic view” of Scripture consistent with the record of all Scripture: even when man fails, God always prevails.
5. Accomplishes these things *without losing hope* in the physical, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ
6. Honors the ministry of the Holy Spirit
7. Places the responsibility for the next move of God where it belongs, on *us*!