

Valley Bible Church – Adult Class

Living in Light of His Return

Introduction to Eschatology

Adult SS ~ May 31, 2015

Introduction:

Why I chose this topic...

- It was the subject I knew the *least* about in my Christian life until I actually had a class on it in seminary; it answered a LOT of my "big questions" and was my favorite theology class while attending TMS
- I have gone through this material with the college ministry a year or two back and I am hoping to understand it even better with you guys!
- I have heard multiple people speak of the topic of eschatology in a way that belittles its importance and relevance to our growth in holiness; I hope to set this straight

Why I am excited about this summer study...

- It is a great opportunity to serve Randy Thompson who will be putting together material for a Marriage and Parenting Conference and follow-up series at the end of August; I am a mid-term sub;)
- Most growth groups take a break for the summer, so I want to cultivate a weekly atmosphere of spiritual growth with you guys in the Scriptures
- I am not teaching at Legacy Christian Academy (I'll be doing a good amount of other work), so I get to pour a little extra time into this series at Valley

In order to keep the text of God's Word in front of us rather than behind us in our theological study, let's turn to Christ's Olivet Discourse in the Gospel of Mark 13.

Read Mark 13

Objective:

I have three main objectives this morning: 1) to show how our study of end times fits into the broader study of theology, 2) to provide an illustration (chart) that will keep the big picture before us, and 3) to prove to you the practical relevance of studying eschatology.

Outline:

1. Introduction to Eschatology

a. Defining "theology" in a broader sense

- Many definitions are given in theological works
- "The term *theology* is derived from the Greek *theos*, meaning "God," and *logos*, meaning "word" or "discourse"; hence, "discourse about God." (Moody, 149)

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- iii. Theology can be done in multiple different ways depending on the topic. There is "systematic theology," "Old Testament theology," "New Testament theology," "biblical theology," "historical theology," "dogmatic theology," and "contemporary theology"; all of which are all different ways to organize and understand what the Bible says on a given matter
- (1) "The word systematic comes from the Greek verb *sunistano*, which means "to stand together" or "to organize"; hence, systematic theology emphasizes the systematization of theology." (Moody, 149)
 - (2) "Systematic Theology may be defined as the collecting, scientifically arranging, comparing, exhibiting, and defending of all facts from any and every source concerning God and His works." (Chafer, Moody Handbook, 149)
 - (3) So, for the purposes of this class, for instance, we are going to talk about the doctrine of last things. To do this, we will be systematizing the main passages that give us information on the end times.
- iv. When considering the relationship between theology and Scripture itself, we might ask, "If we have the revelation of God Himself in the Bible, then why would we need systematic theology?" *Does organized theology actually improve upon the way Scripture was written in the first place?*
- (1) No. The Scriptures must be understood in their entirety. But systematic theology is like standing on the shoulders of believers who read the Scriptures before us and provided the most pertinent passages and summaries of texts to questions like, "What does the Bible teach about the return of Christ?" Other questions often come up as well, such as, "What does the Bible teach about sin, the Holy Spirit, salvation?" Systematic theology exists because we are finite beings and do not have all the time at our disposal to read the entire Bible looking for all the answers to one question.
 - (2) "Theology is the application of Scripture, by persons, to every area of life." (Frame, 8) So his answer as to the question, "Why do we need theology?" is "to better apply Scripture to life."

b. Reasons we tend to avoid theology

- i. *What are some possible reasons why we tend to avoid studying and discussing theology?*

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ii. *How would you respond to each of these excuses for not studying theology?*

- (1) "It's Dry"
- (2) "It's Confusing"
- (3) "It's Irrelevant"
- (4) "It's Demanding"
- (5) "It's Divisive"

c. **Every believer is a theologian**

- i. I think the reason why Christians react against this statement is because they feel like they don't know enough of the Bible to build their own theology, or maybe they are being falsely humble, or they might have the wrong idea as to what makes someone a theologian
- ii. The blind man in John 9 was healed by Christ and brought into the Temple before the religious leaders of Israel. They began debating among themselves trying to figure out what to make of this miracle. They try to get him to write Jesus off as a sinner, but he replies as a simple yet confident theologian, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see" (Jn 9:25).
- iii. "There is no higher activity in which the mind may be engaged than the pursuit of a knowledge of God." J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 11 [SLIDE]
- iv. The most important thing about a person is their thoughts of God.
- v. Think for a moment about the inexhaustible, immeasurable, unsearchable greatness of God. He cannot be known fully, but He can be known truly. We are astounded by just the outskirts of His ways (Job 26:14). Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor (Romans 11:34)? There is nothing more exciting or more exhilarating than to know that we will be spending the rest of our lives getting to know more and more of who God is and what He has done! If you don't care about doctrine, then you aren't a disciple.

d. **Sound doctrine enables sound living**

- i. Exodus 20:2 and 20:3–17
- ii. Proverbs 1–9 and 10–31
- iii. Ephesians 1–3 and 4–6
- iv. Romans 1–11 and 12–16
- v. Hebrews 1–11 and 12–13

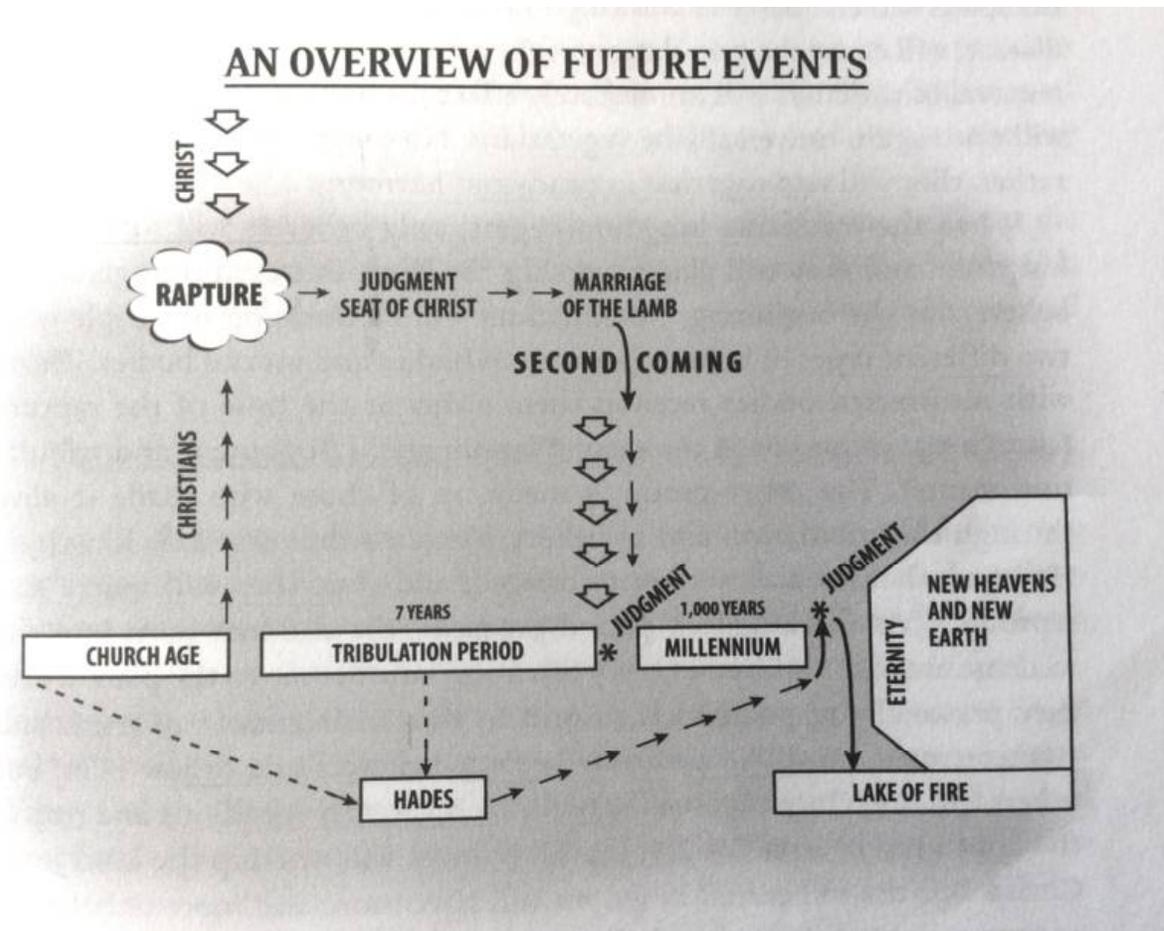
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- vi. **Titus 2:1, 10** “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine...**10** not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.”
- vii. SUMMARY: Eschatology is the study of last things according to the Scriptures so that we might apply them to our lives

2. Illustration of Eschatology

- a. Often times when trying to grasp your mind around something conceptually thick, it helps to insert some sort of image or illustration for the purpose of understanding and memory
- b. What I would like to do now is to provide for you an end times chart on board
- c. There are key phases that we will give a week each to in our series. Today I am going to show them all to you to get eschatology in its “big picture.” Hopefully we will gain some perspective as we take the whole and examine its parts.
 - i. **The Rapture of the Church–**
 - ii. **The Judgment Seat of Christ–**
 - iii. **The Tribulation Period–**
 - iv. **The Second Coming of Christ–**
 - v. **The Sheep and Goats Judgment–**
 - vi. **The Millennial Kingdom–**
 - vii. **The Great White Throne Judgment–**
 - viii. **The Eternal State–**
 - ix. Here is the chart in your notes, courtesy of Paul A. Benware in his excellent book, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*:

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3. Implications of Eschatology

- a. Having a better understanding of eschatology brings out many implications for our everyday life.
- b. **Underline the moral implications drawn from these eschatological texts:**
 - i. **Titus 2:11** *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **12** training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, **13** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, **14** who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."*
 - ii. **2 Peter 3:14** *"Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace."*

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- iii. **1 Peter 1:3** *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials.”*
- iv. **1 John 3:2** *“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”*
- v. **Philippians 3:17** *“Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”*
- vi. **2 Corinthians 4:16** *“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”*
- vii. **2 Corinthians 5:9** *“So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”*
- viii. **Romans 12:12** *“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”*
- ix. **Hebrews 10:24** *“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*
- c. *“The most significant reason for engaging in this study is that a contemplation of future events in God’s plan fosters an expectancy that prepares one’s heart for a life of worship, joy, and obedience.” Matthew Waymeyer, *Revelation 20 and the Millennial Debate*, 1*

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d. Consider the countless life scenarios for sound eschatology to be applied:

- i. You are losing hope in your marriage or with another relationship...studying eschatology helps you refocus your hope in what is certain and secure and unfading
- ii. You generally lack a sense of purpose and direction in life...studying eschatology reveals the mystery of God's purpose and plan for all heaven and earth
- iii. You have been abused or taken advantage of and you are want revenge...studying eschatology will help you to trust in the Lord who is come back to right all wrongs
- iv. Your good works and service to the Lord and others doesn't seem to be noticed or worth it...studying eschatology helps us to await our heavenly reward that is coming the moment we are raptured or retired physically
- v. You sit in church worshipping with other believers...studying eschatology will deepen your thoughts of God, His plan, and eternal purposes in Christ the King
- vi. You just had a discussion with an unsaved friend or family member...studying eschatology will help you to move toward them with the good news of the coming Kingdom of God in a fitting manner

Conclusion:

As someone once said, "Bible prophecy is not given so we can make a *calendar*—it's given to mold our *character*." That is why I am sticking with our main title for this series, "Living in Light of His Return."

Class Titles:

1. "Living in Light of His Return: Introduction to Eschatology"
2. "Living in Light of His Return: The Rapture of the Church"
3. "Living in Light of His Return: The Judgment Seat of Christ"
4. "Living in Light of His Return: The Tribulation, Part I"
5. "Living in Light of His Return: The Tribulation, Part II"
6. "Living in Light of His Return: The Marriage Supper of the Lamb"
7. "Living in Light of His Return: The Second Coming of Christ, Part I"
8. "Living in Light of His Return: The Second Coming of Christ, Part II"

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9. "Living in Light of His Return: The Millennial Kingdom, Part I"
10. "Living in Light of His Return: The Millennial Kingdom, Part II"
11. "Living in Light of His Return: The Great White Throne Judgment"
12. "Living in Light of His Return: The Eternal State, Part I"
13. "Living in Light of His Return: The Eternal State, Part II"