

# INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF END TIMES

## INTRODUCTION

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- Eschatology = study of end times
- From Greek word *eschatos* which means “end or last”

**2 Timothy 3:1** ~ But realize this, that in the **last** days difficult times will come.

**1 Peter 1:5** ~ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the **last** time.

**1 Peter 1:20** ~ For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these **last** times for the sake of you

**2 Peter 3:3** ~ Know this first of all, that in the **last** days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,

**1 John 2:18** ~ 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.

- Why is eschatology such a difficult area to study?
  - It hasn't happened yet
  - Interpreting prophetic/apocalyptic sections of Scripture can be difficult
  - There is a temptation to conform to a theological system
  - It takes a lot of work

### Why it is Important to Study End Times

(Adapted from *Understanding End Times Prophecy* by Paul Benware)

#### 1. It reminds us that God is Sovereign

**Isaiah 46:9-10** ~ Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'

**Revelation 1:18** ~ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

- In a world that is filled with chaos and wickedness, it is important to understand that God, not Satan or any other power, is in control
- Our God is the king of the universe, both now and in the future

Psalm 2

#### 2. It reminds us that God is good

- Life, even for the Christian, is hard...it is filled with sorrow and pain, hardship and difficulty
- Studying the end times reminds us of the goodness of God in that He has written the final chapter – we know how it ends

- For the believer, it ends good, in heaven, living in the presence of a gracious, kind, and loving God

**Romans 8:18** ~ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18** ~ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

### 3. It Motivates us to Holy Living

**1 John 3:2-3** ~ Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure

### 4. It Helps us Establish Proper Priorities

**Matthew 24:32-51**

**Matthew 25:1-30**

**2 Peter 3:10-13** ~ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, **what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness**, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

### 5. It Gives us Hope

**Revelation 19:1-7** ~ After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her." And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

### 6. It Brings God's Blessing

**Revelation 1:3** ~ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

## MAJOR END TIME ISSUES

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### Nature of the Millennium (Premillennial, Amillennial, Postmillennial)

- Timing - Are we in it now or is it future?
- Nature - Is it a spiritual kingdom or a literal earthly kingdom where Christ is ruling and reigning?

- Why is this a critical issue?
  - Theological Systems—Dispensationalism vs. Reformed
  - Continuity – Discontinuity issue

### **Timing of the Rapture (Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib, Post-Trib)**

- Why emphasized so much sometimes - Scofield Study Bible, Hallmark of Dispensationalism

### **Hell**

- Hell: Forever, Temporary, or Annihilationism?

## **APPROACHING END TIME ISSUES**

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### **Hermeneutical Consistency**

- This means we interpret prophecy in same way interpret rest of Bible
  - Literal-Historical-Grammatical Method of Interpretation
- Many who interpret prophecy are inconsistent in their approach
  - Literal in narrative
  - Spiritual/figurative in prophecy
- They tend to ignore some of the basic rules so it fits their system
- Key Rules for Interpreting Prophecy:

#### **1. Interpret the Passage Literally**

- This is the most important rule of all the rules for interpreting prophecy
- This rule starts with the assumption that God wants us to understand the end times not be confused by them
- God based his revelation about prophecy on the normal rules of communication
- Literal interpretation understands that in normal communication and in the Scriptures figures of speech are valuable as communication devices

- How we use figures of speech: It is raining cats and dogs...There were millions of mosquitoes in the backyard last night...I'm so hungry I could eat a horse
- Bible uses similar figures of speech in prophecy: Isaiah 11:1 ~ Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. (This literally refers to Christ)

- Those in the amillennial school of prophecy deny the principle of literal interpretation and hold instead to the principle of spiritualization (i.e. that prophetic passages must be understood “spiritually”)
- Example: Luke 1:31-33 ~ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”
- One who spiritualizes prophecy will take the first part of these verses literally (referring to Christ) and the last part spiritually (that Christ will rule in the hearts of those belonging to the church not over Israel literally)
- Our basic approach to God’s prophetic word must be a literal one

## 2. Compare prophecy with prophecy

- God did not give all prophetic information to any individual prophet
- Many authors over a period of centuries received God’s revelation about end times
- Since God is the author of all Scripture, no prophecy will contradict another prophecy
- Example: Revelation 20 speaks about the millennium but so to do Isaiah, Daniel, and Jeremiah

## 3. Be aware of possible time intervals

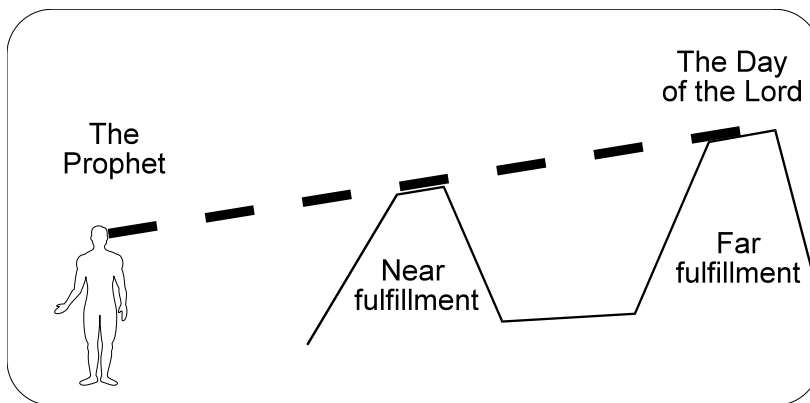
**Zechariah 9:9-10** ~ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (first coming of Christ); 10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth. (second coming of Christ)

- Zechariah probably was not aware that his two statements would be separated by thousands of years

**Isaiah 61:1-2** ~ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord (first coming of Christ) And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, (second coming of Christ)

- Isaiah probably was not aware that his two statements would be separated by thousands of years (cf. Luke 4:16-21 where Jesus interpreted these verses – stopped quoting after “favorable year of the Lord”)

**Daniel 9:24-27** ~ Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. (first coming of Christ) And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.” (before second coming of Christ)



## 4. Be aware of Double Reference Prophecy

**Daniel 9:27** ~ And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

- This prophecy was partially fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes in 175 BC
- But 200 years later, Jesus looked ahead to the days of tribulation when the abomination of desolation will have its later, complete fulfillment

**Matthew 24:15-16** ~ Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains

- Thus, certain prophecies have 1 sense, but multiple referents

## 5. Interpret Figurative Language Scripturally

### a) In light of the Immediate Context

Example:

Ezekiel 37:1-10 is the Vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones; often this passage is seen as a metaphor for salvation

But Ezekiel 37:11-14 clearly says the dry bones represent the nation of Israel; thus, this passage is about the resurrection and salvation and restoration of the nation of Israel

### b) In light of the Larger Context

### c) In light of the Historical Cultural Context

## **Exegetical Foundation (rather than systematic)**

- Basic difference: What is first...Exegesis or Systematics?
- In this area of theology, systematics tends to drive exegesis and so assumptions are often made
- Thus, the goal is always to try to be as objective as possible and allow exegesis to drive systematic theology not vice versa

