

"You and Your Beliefs"--Eschatology, part 1

Do you know what you believe?

For the past several months, we have been seeking to answer that question. We have sought to put together a "systematic theology." We've sought to answer the question about our beliefs concerning the doctrines of God, Scripture, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and more.

We've now come to the final doctrine. Eschatology. The Doctrine of Last Things.

[At beginning, finish Angelology, part 2, then begin eschatology]

### **The Doctrine of Last Things**

Discuss: What do you think of when you hear the word "Eschatology"?

Some people seem to think of charts and graphs diagramming the order of future events. As a general rule, we tend to go to 2 extremes:

One is to be overly dogmatic about that which is a complex issue. Remember, that was the problem of the religious leaders of Jesus' day. Jesus didn't fit into their "theological chart." They wanted a Messiah who would give them political and economic freedom. They were sure that's what the Messiah would do, based on their "proof-texting" from the OT scriptures.

Application: Be careful of labeling other Christians "heretics" because they hold a different view than we do on what the 10 toes represent on the beast in Daniel's vision!

The other extreme is to say, "Eschatology doesn't matter. It's too confusing. Who cares?"

Key: The focus on Eschatology in the Bible is not on future events as such. God didn't give us a chart of the end times. What is the focus?

See the first words of Rev 1:1, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ..." Eschatology in the Bible focuses on a Person, Jesus Christ.

Phil 3:20 "For our citizenship...from which we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus..."

So Eschatology is important. It is the climax of the Christian life. It is our hope. We live with the anticipation that Jesus Christ is going to appear, and when He appears He is going to culminate the redemption He secured at His first coming.

#### *Outline of our Approach to Eschatology:*

##### I. The Foundation for Eschatology: The Plan of God

- A. The Doctrine of Creation (Gen 1-3)
- B. The Doctrine of Redemption (II Cor 5:19, 21)
  - 1. Christ's First Coming (I Cor 15:3)
  - 2. Christ's Second Coming (I Cor 15:22ff)

## II. The Focus of Eschatology: The Person of Jesus Christ

## III. The Fulfillment of Eschatology

- A. New Man
- B. New People
- C. New Age
- D. New Creation

Before we can understand the Doctrine of the Last things, we must understand what the Bible teaches about the "First things." Eschatology is merely the final chapter of the book.

Key: Eschatology is the culmination of God's redemptive activity in which He is reclaiming what is rightfully His. What do we mean by that?

Simply this. If we don't understand the Doctrine of Creation, and the Doctrine of Redemption, we won't understand the Doctrine of Eschatology.

## I. The Foundation for Eschatology: The Plan of God

### A. The Doctrine of Creation--Genesis 1

Q: When God created the universe in Gen 1, what did He say about it?

Gen 1:31--"It is very good."

Q: What was the climax of God's creative work?

Gen 1:27--Man

Q: What did God create Mankind to do?

Gen 1:28--Have dominion over the world, as God's Representative.

Q: Did mankind fulfill that purpose?

Gen 3--No. Mankind rejected God's authority and purpose.

Q: In spite of Man's blatant disobedience, what did God do?

Gen 3:15--He inaugurated a plan to reconcile alienated mankind to Himself. Listen. Right there in Gen 3, God committed Himself to the task of reclaiming what was rightfully His.

Q: How would God accomplish that? The answer is...

### B. The Doctrine of Redemption--2 Corinthians 5:19-21

Q: What did God do to reclaim an alienated world that was rightfully His?

5:19--He reconciled the world to Himself.

Q: On what basis did God reconcile the world?

5:21--He redeemed a people for Himself in Christ.

Key: There's the message of the Bible. God is redeeming a people for Himself.

He is reclaiming and restoring a universe that was wrecked by sin. He committed this task to His Son, Jesus Christ.

Q: By what means will Christ restore the world to His Father?

By two comings—We see them both mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15...

#### 1. The First Coming of Christ

15:3 "Christ died for our sins..."

#### 2. The Second Coming of Christ

15:22-28 "...when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom of God to the Father..."

Christ came into the world the first time to establish the Kingdom of God . At that time, it was not a geographical kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom. Jesus rules as King in the hearts of His people (Lk 17:21).

At His second coming, He will establish His earthly Kingdom. Why? To fulfill the next phase of His redemptive program, that is, to reclaim the world.

Is the Millennial Kingdom His ultimate goal? No. The goal of God's redemptive program is not the Millennial Kingdom . It's bigger. When the Son hands over the reclaimed Kingdom to the Father, and inaugurates the New Heavens and Earth, the plan will be accomplished.

## **II. The Focus of Eschatology: The Person of Jesus Christ**

The focus of Eschatology is not on events so much as on a Person, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is coming again!

Note: There are over 250 clear references to the return of the Lord in the NT.

Mt 24:37, 42, 44 "Watch for you know not what hour your Lord doth come."

Mk 13:26 "And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds..."

Lk 21:27

Jn 14:1ff "I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again..."

Acts 1:11 "...This same Jesus shall so come again in like manner..."

I Thes 4:13 "The Lord shall descend from heaven..."

II Thes 1:10; 2:1

I Pt 1:7 "...at the appearing of Christ..."

I Jn 3:2 "...when He shall appear..."

Rev 22:7, 12, 20 "Behold, I come."

Q: Why is Christ going to return? Rev 21:5 "I make all things new."

Key: Our Eschatology must focus on a Person, Jesus Christ.

Eschatology is not a game like trivial pursuit, or putting together an intellectual jigsaw puzzle. It focuses on a Person. He is the King who has already come. And He is the King who is yet to come again.

Q: What will He do when He comes the second time? We'll see next week.

Application: For discussion...

1. Why is Eschatology often such a source of controversy in the church?
2. What should our attitude be towards Eschatology?
3. What is the practical value of studying Eschatology?

### **Next Week:**

#### III. The Fulfillment of Eschatology

- A. New Man
- B. New People
- C. New Age
- D. New Creation

