
***Into Thy Word* Bible Study in Revelation**

Into Thy Word Ministries www.intothyword.org

Biblical Eschatology

This comes down to how Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation are interpreted.

What is your view of “Eschatology” or “End Times?” This is the study of our Christian beliefs concerning all future and final events, such as Jesus’ Second coming and the final judgment. How sure are you that your view is correct? It all comes down to this point: do you read into the text what you want it to say? Or do you read from the text what God’s Word has to say? Most Christians, pastors included, will say they never read into the text of Scripture. So, you have to go before God in sincerity and honesty and seek Him, not your or someone else’s ideas. You have to surrender pride and presumptions to really catch what *caught up* really means! We have to really read, not assume, or we will get it wrong and thus lead our churches down the wrong path, making minors the majors and missing the point of our call and duty as a local church.

The Basic Definition of Eschatology

It comes from the Greek words *eschatos*, meaning “last,” and *logos*, here meaning “reason of the word.” Together, they mean “the discourse of the Last Days” or the “final things of the Church and Kingdom age.” Some see this as Christ’s prophesy of the End of Days from Matthew 24, while others see Daniel and Revelation—or both. These include the return of Christ, His judgments because of humanity’s apostasy, and Heaven and Hell as the final destination of our souls. Other topics creep into this arena such as a tribulation, rapture, and antichrist, and the fights and arguments over these, when in fact, these are not what Biblical Eschatology is all about.

There are many ways people in the last hundred years have sought to identify “Biblical Eschatology.” Some have engaged this quest as a look into one’s own traditions or denominational frameworks and then developed arguments for it without careful research or exegesis in the texts of Scripture. Others have presupposed a literal meaning into words and language that is clearly metaphorical and never bothered to look into what those words meant to the original audience. Others did the opposite and only sought what it meant to the first century, ignoring what God has had for the Church throughout the centuries, for us today, and for tomorrow. There are those who only seek the current newspaper headlines and ignore church history and biblical relevance while still others seek to make a new framework and call it historic.

What is “Popular” Eschatology?

What is the hot view of Eschatology today? We have the Dispensational views, the Reformed view, the other variations of Protestant views, and then there is the Catholic and so many subsets of each of these theologies. It should be clear, because God’s Word is clear when we take the time to see eschatological passages in their

context, language, and genre structure. We need to see what is actually there, not what we want to be there. Like any other reading pursuit, you do not use a textbook for poetry or poetry for a lecture in biology or give a lecture at a wedding or a lullaby at a deposition in a court of law. That transpires in how you read a text: a novel versus a technical paper or directions. A textbook is read and examined and notes taken whereas a novel is enjoyed and even skimmed. Language is predicted by its usage, meaning of context, and situation to name a few. This is true for any work of literature, including the Bible as it is a collection of literature, but also God's Word. If we get this point we can get Eschatology, as the Church has for the most part. But in the last one hundred and fifty years and mainly in the last few decades, many new views of Eschatology have come about. Mainly from the absence of knowing and being willing to learn about the Bible, many factions and infighting and fringe groups have developed. All because people claiming to know Christ as Lord no longer are effectively reading His Word the Bible; rather, they read into the Bible instead of reading from the Bible. They place into the Bible what they want it to say instead of taking out of the Bible what God actually says. So people come to His most precious Word and seek what they want instead of what He has for us. These are most of the popular views; they can be fun and make for invigorating discussions. By the way, what is actually there is much more effectual and wondrous than any of our wild popular theories. Thus, when most Christians today get into the subjects of Biblical prophecy, eschatology, end times, and the Second Coming of Jesus, they get it wrong and in so doing make up theories and claim them as dogmatic fact, saying there will be a *Rapture*, what Israel's role must be, the rise of an specific Antichrist and what he must do, a Seven year Tribulation, all that "must happen" for or before a Millennial reign and/or Christ Second Coming, and other various sub topics. And their only debate is not their biblical right for these things to exist, but what order, sequence, and what I heard Francis Schaeffer say to me on this, *the particulars of nonsense*.

Thus, what we have is a multitude of diverse opinions about what Biblical Eschatology is and how it relates to end times and how it affects the Church and Christ's Second Coming.

My Journey in Eschatology

I firmly believed in the classic dispensational view, a rapture, a seven year tribulation and Millennial reign of Christ. It was fact to me without question and a hill I would die upon—until someone challenged me on it. My very own high school youth group to whom I was teaching Revelation, kept asking me *where is that? I do not see it! This does not make sense*. And I could not answer their questions. I knew how to study the Bible but I was not using my own tools for Revelation or Matthew chapter twenty-four. Instead, I was relying on my prized possession a 1940's edition of *The Scofield Study Bible* I received from one of my mentors, my favorite commentaries, one by Dr. John Walvoord and the other by Frank Gaebelin, not to mention I had also mostly memorized Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. But I could not defend my positions biblically; I could only quote those who held that view. I just assumed I just did not get it and they did. So I decided to just read the Book of Revelation without reading my views into it, as many of us naturally do. I kept doing this for over ten years. During

the same time, I had a run-in with one of my seminary professors about the Rapture who said none of this was biblical. I thought he was crazy; how could it not be biblical? What about all the great people who teach this, such as Ironside, Wiersbe, and Walter Martin to name a few, plus my mentor Ray Steadman who introduced me to *Scotfield and Darby*.

So, I engaged this subject wholeheartedly; I wanted to see for myself. I read all the passages and the books, yet I could not find anything in the Bible where we could get a Rapture view or any declension of that view, or any of the classic dispensational views I thought were fact. In fact, I could not find the popular ideas of others, taught by so many people as dogmatic and even essential doctrine. The passages that are used to support a rapture and a seven year tribulation said nothing to this. People who I would consider great exegetes and godly men were teaching this; I asked why. Why were they producing so much of these *particulars of nonsense*? Perhaps they were just like all of us; maybe they made mistakes at logic or interpretation, or did not do their homework well. Or, maybe they did what I did, just relied on others and my favorite teachers and take it as that. I couldn't get what many popular sensationalists were saying either. What most Christians now believe and what I believed at one time was not there in the Bible's evidence bag. I could not find a seven-year tribulation, an antichrist as a particular person, or a rapture or the Millennial reign that most pastors preach on and the plot lines of many popular Christian Books. I found that you have to read these things into the Bible because it just is not there; all the passages that were claimed were taken out of their context and twisted, and meanings subscribed to them that were not there originally or in reality. I was upset, mad, and confused that I had missed the point. So I decided to make this a Schaeffer Institute project and then spent over ten years of careful exegetical and inductive analysis of Revelation, Matthew chapter 24 and many other Eschatological passages before I would write on this publicly as I am now. I sought what they clearly said, not what I was taught they said, or what I wanted them to say or what was popular in my theological tradition. Then I took the four main theories and laid them out side by side next to an exegetical and inductive work into the Book of Revelation. I was careful not to read into it any presumptions, leaving it up to you, the reader, to make your own conclusion—the reason it took ten years. Yes, this was tough and cost me a lot of sleepless nights and struggles to look at what I thought I already knew so well. This brought me to what real Biblical Eschatology is, to end times from what the Bible clearly speaks on.

What is Biblical Eschatology?

It is the study of our Christian beliefs concerning end times and the Second Coming of Christ as taught by an exegetical analyses of Scripture. For us to go to the Bible, we have to realize it is a book written in a different language and to a different culture using images, symbols, and metaphors we may not know as well as we think today. Thus, we are to assume a passage is literal until we get to a term that does not make sense or fit. Saying to a non-English speaker, *it is raining cats and dogs* will not make sense to them, just as *beast* will not make sense to an America Christian two thousand years removed. So what do we do? Read the Bible right and seek its truth, leaving ours aside.

It is the application of what Francis Schaeffer said as “true-Truth!” What does the Bible really say? Not what I think truth is, but willing to lay one’s truth aside for an honest investigation should not be feared; if you are right, Scripture will pan you out. If you are wrong, wouldn’t you rather be right on the side of the Bible, regardless of what others may think, or your own pride that may need to be swallowed? Then if you still feel your truth is correct and you did your homework, you are better off. But what usually happens is that we push our truth forward, ignoring logic, sound reasoning, and biblical exegesis such as, what did these terms and ideas mean in their original languages, set in their contexts, genre, and cultural meanings? What did these words from Scripture mean to the human authors used by the Holy Spirit as well as the hearers at the time, not from a newspaper today that is at a different time, culture, and language. This is what real effectual factual truth is in action and in application, asking the question *what the bible clearly says in its actual meaning and context not what we think it should say.*

Then we have the “popular problem,” or what many people today seek—to just relate it to their personal traditions or trends or theological ideas or worse feelings. “True-Truth” is mathematical and has a definitive answer; Scripture indeed has definitive answers too—If we are willing to look. Most of the time they are in plain sight, because the Bible says what it says and means what it means. But sometimes we get to a term such as “beast” and wonder what that is. So we must ask, *what is that*, and not assume. A little careful research in quality sources will reveal it and its real truth. Real truth is not always what my denomination or theological framework or my favorite preacher or author has to say, or some comparison of it. Nor is it my truth or what is relative to my feelings, personal thoughts, or ideas predicated by my hurts or outlook or worldview.

Real “Exegetical Eschatology” simply means we go to God’s Word and take from it and not read into it. With “our” truth, we go to God’s Word and read in our will and ideas, what is in it for us, and respond to how we feel at that time with a careless attitude to what real truth is. In *true-Truth* we go to the Bible as surrendered beings, seeking to know and glorify Christ because He is Truth as is His Word. This is the science of *Inductive* and *Exegetical Methodology*. We get to the real Truth as revealed in God’s Word versus what we want to or feel may be truth. After all, we are removed two thousand years from these times not to mention the language and cultural barriers from the original writings of the Bible from which we glean.

Many great expositors of the Bible have gotten End Times and Revelation wrong—including me. Why does this happen? We get lazy and do not do the proper exegetical work or just turn to our favorite mentor or preacher and take his findings at face value, never really carefully examining what and why we believe. Perhaps we just trust our favorite commentary or study Bible and forget they are the words of mere men who may have done a marvelous job at a logical strength for an Epistle like Romans and Matthew, but then took their brains out when they got to Revelation. I did this; I did not use my own *Into Thy Word Bible Study Methods* I had taught for over ten years before realizing my errors. I just trusted in the charts I received from a mentor. The rules of biblical interpretation were not followed, and misled and confused both others and us. We must come to God’s Word with reverence and a surrendered will and seek its

relevance using the appropriate tools. Furthermore, when we come to a theory or idea we test them with the same rules. In this way, we can effectively see what lines up to Scripture and what does not. (For more information see *Exegetical Methods* on our sister website www.intothyword.org)

Biblical Eschatology is seeking what the Bible Actually Says

If we do not follow and use the proper “hermeneutical rules” to interpret the Bible we will end up with bad theology at best and cultism at worst, just as what has happened. Thus, to discover God’s lessons for us, what does the original language, genre, cultural breakdown to the original hearers of this work? What did that term mean to John and those seven churches, not just what we may think they mean today.

Rule 1: Scripture Interprets Scripture.

The Bible is its own commentary. This means, we ask *was that said before?* and if so, where and what was the context? We are to interpret the words literally and in their historical sense, unless the “context” or “manner” in which they are used seems to be out of context or a contradiction or dissimilar. An example would be the OT Prophets or Apocryphal language that would indicate symbolic meanings. This does not diminish the meaning; it actually extenuates it when we have the key to the metaphor, and Scripture is always the key to Scripture.

Did you know that a lot of the Book of Revelation is found in Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and not so much in Daniel? Thus, before we come to any eschatological conclusions, we are to make sure the passage about which we are reading or writing is clear and is backed up by other passages of Scripture and that we use these other passages to help us make sense of the meaning. For example: there is a lot of confusion over the *mark* and *666*. Many people see them as the mark of the antichrist tricking people into worshipping the beast or himself. Or, a counterfeit Jewish messiah or a slick false preacher is the “false prophet” mentioned in Rev. 16:13. These *images* bring all kinds of speculations—from an idol coming to life to a robot, a computer chip implanted in people, or some other technology that God can’t do anything about, while others see this as the rebuilt Temple captivating people. The *mark* and *buying and selling* are also seen as the world changing to a cashless society, ripe for corruption and control by the antichrist. One crazy theory after the other appears while no one seems to bother to take a look into the Old Testament such as Ezekiel 9:4-6 that John was quoting and see what these images meant, or look at Deuteronomy 13:1-11; or John Himself telling us what the antichrist is all about in 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; or 2 John 1:7. Not sure? See for yourself on the Bible study in **Revelation 13:11-18**, http://70030.netministry.com/articles_view.asp?articleid=33585&columnid=3803&contentonly=true

This rule is simple: we use the Bible to see what other parts of the Bible say and this clears it up. What we do not do is come up with a theology by ignoring contexts, word meanings, and other passages. The Bible does not contradict itself; it does bring more light and insight, so use it.

Rule 2: Context, Context, and Context...

What does the passage say in its surrounding, in its history, and/or the nature of the word used? The definition of a word is predicated (attached) to the situation and context of the sentence. Is it a metaphor, such as object is defined by how it is described and used in the surrounding sentences? Or it may be a symbol, such as; we come to a fork in the road. Do we eat with it? Context tells us, because the Bible was not written to us, it was written to a specific people, situation, and culture, yet, it is still God's Word. In addition, God's Word was not just written to them, it also is written for us. Therefore, we can easily extract its meaning and make effectual applications for today's and tomorrow's Christian living, including cross culturally. Then there are other contexts such as the language and the relevance of the audience. For example, what did it mean to the original hearers and readers? We do this before we come up with an application today, because our application must not contradict the intended meaning. If we do not follow this rule, we can easily make any passage mean whatever we want it to mean, or make it apply to whomever or whatever we desire while disregarding what God has to say!

For example, in Revelation 14:14-20, John is giving us a portrayal of the "Last Days" and the "Second Coming" of Christ our Lord where Christ is the great Director, directing His representatives in the reaping and the harvesting of humanity's souls. This passage represents the quintessence of how most people, including many Christians, see Revelation. Yes, this is correct to a point; but, it is also so much more. Thus, most commentators miss the main points. It is not just about judgment; it is about how we are called to life too! It is a great hope for the faithful who bear good fruit for Him, and a great fear to the godless who bear rotten fruit (Gen. 19:24; Psalm 112:10; Joel 3:12-16; Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 13:36-43; 24:14; Luke 3:17; John 15:1-8; Gal. 5; Rev. 1:13).

Thus, many commentators come to this passage and see this as just the horrific, ultimate judgment of the wicked while Christ gathers His saints to safety. The *Son of Man* is seen as Christ Himself and His Second Coming, of His judging the wicked. They see no problem with the angel giving commands to Christ, as it is a message of the Father to the Son. The *sickle* represents God's love and the gathering of the faithful as they are separated from the unfaithful. Some see this happening after the rapture and these as the Christians who are saved post-rapture (a pre-tribulation view), while others hold a view that the rapture takes place (post-tribulation view) when Christ comes—after the tribulation. Some see this as the battle of Armageddon and these as literal images of that battle. In addition, there are lengthy views of this battle and what it means; very speculative, but not essential doctrine. A problem with this view is this: according to the Bible, the battle of Armageddon never takes place; it is only prepared for, "gathered" (Rev. 16:16). Thus, to get this theory that the battle took place and many of the theories in this camp, you have to take a whole bunch of passages out of their context, string them together, and ignore the context and actual meanings of the words. You would have to create your own word meanings, ignore Jewish culture, and completely disregard the Old Testament, Matthew 24, and the original languages in order to create this view. This is very minor stuff theologically; I am not sure how Christ would feel about that, do you? Perhaps, a look into 2 Peter should cause us to tremble if we dare

seek to twist and/or read in our ideas to His Word. Always be careful not to read into the Bible what you want it to say; rather, seek what The Word actually says, even if it goes against your personal thinking!

Exegetical Eschatology

This is also called “Exegetical Eschatology,” meaning “to draw from,” for serious or *critical* examination of a text of Scripture for the purpose of explanation, clarification, and interpretation. For the authentic Christian, it provides a better framework of God’s principles and can be a shredder for its critics—as in those who oppose faith and reason or the Truth of Christ and His principles. This is done by examining the facts, details, and essence of a Bible text before making any conclusions. This means we engage the text with careful *exegesis*, uninhibited by theological prejudice, with an inductive process with open minds to discover God’s lessons for us. What does the original language, genre, and cultural analysis do, considering the original hearers of this work? What did that term mean to John and those seven churches, or what was Jesus saying in Matthew chapter twenty-four, not just what we may think it means today. Otherwise, our preconceived ideas will form our opinions rather than what the Word actually says. This is how the Reformers, Calvin and Luther, did their studies (although they subscribed to the Historicist view), as well as Augustine (who was mostly a Futurist, but not like the Futurists today) and other great men. They were seeking His revealed truth inductively, applying literal interpretation (if the genre allows), and historical and grammatical exegesis, not mere human speculations and traditions. This is what we seek to do at *Into Thy Word*.

Thus, Biblical Eschatology looks at the whole text in its context and pulls out facts, examining the particulars, facts, and essence of a Bible text before making any assumptions or conclusions. Then, it interprets and applies them. There are no false teachings or misleading ideas with this method as long as the *exegete* is honest to the text. The goal is sound, Biblical Theology from the honest exegesis of the Scriptures—not traditions but pure unadulterated truth—not one’s theological framework, but rather biblical truth (see [Understanding Apocalyptic Literature](#) for more information).

What does this all have to do with church leadership? The sad fact is that too many of our churches are spending too much time and energy on speculative theology while completely ignoring the calls and commands of Christ. While we invent these *particulars of nonsense*, too many people go un-reached and thus un-disciplined because of our foolishness. Let’s stop the nonsense and focus on that to which God has clearly and assuredly called us!