
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

Into Thy Word Ministries www.intothyword.org

How *Important* is Eschatology?

First of all this is not an essential issue, as “Eschatology,” meaning *End Times Theology*, is debatable and has no real bearing on orthodoxy versus unorthodoxy, unless it is distracting you from the person and work of Christ. Nor is this even an important issue, as God is far more concerned with our faith formation and practice than our debate techniques and quibbling. You can be a good, deep-seated Christian of the Faith whatever view of end times Eschatology to which you subscribe. Thus, if you hold to a Preterist view and your friend is a Futurist, neither of you is engaged in heresy, although one or both of you will be wrong! Just make sure you pray, research, and think the issues through. Most people do not think or research; they just believe by blind faith. Real faith is not blind—either to Christ or to His Word! What is really wrong and distracting to both Christians and especially non-Christians is when we allow our sensationalism to run amok, getting carried away with the latest, captivating trends of popular or Christian culture. Why? Because the future has not happened yet; Christ has not come back yet, thus it is foolish to be dogmatic on any human theory. Our sensationalism will only serve Satan and our scoffers, and not give any glory to Christ! By the way, Christ commanded us not to do this,

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. Revelation 22:18-19

To begin this quest, look at the four main views of interpreting Revelation: Futurist, Historicist, Preterist, and Spiritualist; (see **Revelation Background Material link**) as each has both merit and deficiencies, all based on human, logical reasoning. All of these views can be found in Revelation if you ignore the contexts and actual word meanings. Thus, all have significant holes that other parts of Revelation, as well as the other Scriptures, contradict. Each of these views is within the scope of orthodoxy and can be debated academically without assault to faith and practice. It is fair to both faith and academics to seek each view, taking what is biblical and merited and rejecting what is not, and still be rationally honest. In fact, this is the best approach to bring to Biblical Eschatology. This is based on how open and honest we can be and how we obey the rules of Scriptural interpretation, especially word meanings and context. Thus, I believe the proper interpretation is not any of these traditional views—specifically or dogmatically. Rather, each one has its good qualities and some of these can be incorporated into the passages where the context and purpose arises.

If Eschatology is confusing to you, be assured that there is no need to adopt or adhere to any particular viewpoint. In addition, none of us should be captivated to any

one point. Understanding Revelation and all of the various theories and perspectives is not that important. These are “debatable points” that I lay out side by side in the Bible Studies series in Revelation. This way, the research is done all you have to do is read His Word and examine the meanings and see the theories. I did this and found none of the theories are good. All that is important is Who Christ is in you and your trust in Him to work it all out!

When we look to Biblical Eschatology, it is best not to come to Matthew 24 and Revelation without a specific view, as each prophecy can have multiple applications, meanings, and fulfillments that can be true. We must come to Revelation and any eschatological passage with patience and humility, seeking dialog and cooperation rather than disagreements and strife, for that is clearly in error. We are to interpret in light of the historical context and what it meant then. And, for us to think that Revelation meant nothing for 2000 years until our generation came is extremely arrogant and dismissive to the countless Christians who came before us, upon whose shoulders we stand. Biblical Eschatology is for all generations, not just the first century or ours or one to come! Also, we must never seek to be dogmatic with our feeble opinions and limited understandings. The applications in Revelation are for us now, as they were also active in the early Church and will have further meaning and fulfillment in the time to come. Eschatology is not just about the first Christians, nor is it just about what will happen in some distant future. These precepts are for us today, for us to know, for us to use, and for us to deploy deeply in our lives and walk in Christ. What we do know is that Christ is coming back! When Satan will be finally be defeated is not known, but God will comfort and take care of us!

Exegetical Eschatology is using the Bible and logical thinking, not the minds of men’s theorems in disregard to reason. In this way, we can engage this subject properly and see a purpose other than just to satisfy our dogmatic assertions and speculations. Let us not bother with unwarranted calculations, to which we have no idea or call to do. Rather, let us seek His precepts so we can grow further in our spiritual formation and make Him known to others!

Why do so many people get Eschatology (the study of end times) and the Book of Revelation wrong or have crazy ideas or contradictory theories?

Basically, it is because (to say this bluntly), they have not read it or at least have not read it well! It amazes me how some pastors and Bible teachers can go to a text and not “read it,” but can be really good at “reading into it.” That is, instead of reading what is there, in its context, what the words say in the original languages and culture, we read in our theological ideas, frameworks, and presumptions, and thus totally miss what God is actually saying to us!

This is called Eisegesis or Isogesis which simply means “to lead in” or “read into the Text of Scripture” as in to place into the text one’s own presuppositions, ideas, and thoughts while ignoring what is actually there in order to satisfy one’s personal agendas and opinions. In practice, this is using our personal interpretation of what we want the

last days to be about, and the agenda or sequence or meanings we get from our own presupposition. Inserting or expressing our own ideas and bias without seeking what God has or wants us to have is totally wrong at best and evil at worst. We are called to find what it means rather than what we want it to mean. So, when you look at any text of Scripture, your task is to seek the actual, intended meaning of the passage.

(See [Approaches to Studying Scripture](#) for more information)

We are all human and all we know and see comes through our fallen filter made from depravity. We must still do the best we can do. It is always best not to bow to anyone's reasoning, but take a clear look for ourselves. It is most probable that some aspects of each of these views will be in the tapestry of how the events have and will unfold before us. And, when they actually do, as Scripture indicates, all will be made clear to us (Matt. 24). But, whatever view we take or even if we have no view (and no view is as important as the honor and reality that He is coming; personally I do not subscribe to any of these four main views) will be dramatically expressed in due time, His timing, not ours (Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 1:3; 22:20). Thus, it is my endeavor to go into Exegetical Eschatology and the Book of Revelation and bring you what it says, not what others or I think it says.

The Apocalypse?

The end of all things?! This must mean scary, foreboding, calamity beyond measure; right? Well most people think so; Hollywood and its "B" movies think so as do many TV preachers. But is that a reality from in the Bible? Let's take a look at the word that started it all, *Revelation*; it is from the Greek title word "apokalypsis," where we get the term "The Apocalypse." This means the "discourser of events," as opposed to something secret or hidden. It is meant to inspire and encourage those in sufferings to have hope and faith in Christ and to keep loyal to Him and not bow to evil or ones situation. Thus, even though Revelation is symbolic in places, it is not hidden to us when we take an honest look and compare it to other Scriptures rather than trends, false teachers, sensationalists or newspapers. This is also something not to be feared; rather it is to instill in us hope and encouragement. It also means an *uncovering*, an *unveiling* or, as we have it in the English, a *Revelation*. The other title that has been used is "The Apocalypse," this is the English rendering of the Greek. Thus, Revelation is a book of hope and disclosure of John's seven visions to his seven churches and God's exhortations; hence, this is why sometimes it is rendered in the plural, *Revelations*. It is all about showing us God's love and hope—not about a detailed account of what will happen; it is not meant to scare us but to inspire us (Judges 6:11-23; Dan. 7:16; 10:5-21).

Correct Eschatology is also about *Prophecy* that points toward God's revelation, and which contains visions of future events. What is this to be for us? To have wild theorems that lead us nowhere except away from His Truth? No! Most people get this very wrong. Biblical Eschatology is seeing End Times as all about God helping us fortify our faith and remain faithful (Isa. 1:1; Jer. 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Rev. 19:10; 22:7-19).

The purpose and intent of Biblical Eschatology is to excite us about the promises of our Lord Christ and challenge us to get ready by our perseverance of faith in Him. We are to long for Him, but not only that; we are to know Him and seek Him with prayer, study, and fellowship so we will grow in Him. If not, we may be the ones on the outside of His love and care—both now and for eternity.

Even though it has upset a lot of people because many just do not get it, remember this point: Revelation itself is not just about eschatology; it is about doing life right, being loyal to Christ, and growing in faith. This is what is most important and effectual. It is a manifesto on encouragement and a challenge to live a life of “true spirituality” so we will know what to do in all times and in all situations, whether it be in tribulations or in times of triumph. This is what correct Eschatology always points to, not our fanciful theories that only distract us and the people whom we lead from effective church leadership and effectual spiritual growth.

What Will Happen?

Jesus is coming back and it will be beyond spectacular that no words can fully describe! By the way, I think Darby did a great job showing this excitement in eschatological passages even though he has made many exegetical errors. But, the practice of Biblical Eschatology is not just about what will happen in the future, but also what is happening now with the practice of our faith and how we lead our churches. We are called to open our eyes to His wonder and worship Him only—not our ways or trends, and not our pride or feelings. Eschatology also applies more about His Church and that we run it His way, worshipping Him alone. Church and worship are not about what we feel we need or desire; rather, they are about Christ and what He intends. God does not give us an eschatology that is always nice and neat, all wrapped up in a stage-by-stage, play-by-play plan. Eschatological passages such as in Revelation give us a carrot on a stick, as God tells us everything is going to be OK, and *here is My plan. Do not worry or fret over the details, just rely and trust on Me, I will be there!*

Did you know that this *Rapture* is a “theory” that is only a hundred years old, and comes from people who expounded lots of false doctrine as well? Did you know that none of the most brilliant theological minds who ever lived—Augustine, Kempis, Calvin, Luther, and Spurgeon, to name a few—ever taught this?! Perhaps the information is true but we were not ready for it; perhaps it is all fantasy, allegory turned it into theology, which is a very dangerous and false practice!

Let us take a look into a common misunderstanding about the rapture. The phrase often associated with this from 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 is *caught up*. This is a metaphor for *meeting*, as in catching up with your party (i.e. your group). Meeting in the air was a way to say dignitaries from a city, as a great honor, are meeting with emissaries from another city to escort them to a meeting. Sometimes this meant meeting half way like diplomats or generals of opposing armies in a neutral zone. It meant gathering people to join and/or meet with Jesus when He comes back as a “royal

coming” (Matt. 24:27-31; Acts 17:7). This does not mean we get to fly up into the air. It may happen, but this passage as well as others that people use to support this theory, in context, clearly states otherwise. The application can denote that the assembled Church will come together to meet with Jesus physically or in some supernatural way that is yet undesignated. This does not diminish the excitement and wonder when Christ will come back and we get to meet with Him—far more excitement and hope than any convoluted theory could ever give! (I will have more on this in the article the *Last Days Accordingly to Jesus* and *The Rapture*, coming soon.)

Biblical, exegetical Eschatology shows us that Christ brings Heaven to us! He brings peace and a future to us who do not deserve it. Because of Him, we have hope and a future and most of all, we have Him—both now and forevermore! What is better than that?! There is nothing that could be a greater motivator and comfort than knowing for certain who Christ is, what He has done, and what place He has for you and me! Now, let us live our lives as if that were true—because it is true. And, keep in mind these powerful passages as well as John 14 in mind, as love and obedience are connected in Him!

Matthew chapter 24 verse 44 tells us,

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

The call of being ready is to know and be prepared by faith, to grow in our spiritual maturity, to develop godly character, and to be infused by the Spirit and His resulting Fruit. Simply put, it is for this reason that Christ is coming; and, in the meantime, we partake in the building of His Kingdom with the bricks of our faith, each one interlocking with another. How are your bricks being formed and baked?

Why are some Christians so greatly interested in chasing fads and so little interested in effectual truth?

Most in the literal camp are the futurists and dispensationalists who do not always do a good job at looking to context or word meanings or *genres*, which are essential for accurate Bible interpretation. In contrast, many in the non-literalist camp miss the point of the passages all together. Remember, a *rapture*, if or when or how it will come about, or even if it does not, an *antichrist* as a particular person coming to power, a seven-year tribulation and when and how it will take place, a *Beast*, whomever that is, and other such theories are man’s theories read into the text, and not necessarily taken from the text. What do we need to know? God does not always give us explanations to live by; He gives us His promises and His empowerment! God is most concerned with what these images represent—the “living water” from John 7:37-39. Christ is our substance, hope, and life that we are to live for now and that we will have forevermore. This is what makes us *ready*!

Do not be *caught up* with the “hype” of speculations; rather, be caught up with Christ. Do not ignore the veracity of Eschatology and Revelation. His Word is explicit; He tells us what we need to know and that is that. It is a tragedy to chase what is fleeting and miss His wonders and Truth! We have nothing to add to His Word and nothing to improve about it; rather, it is we who need to be approved.

The Application of Revelation and Biblical Eschatology

Revelation, as most evangelicals understand it, is about the last days and the judgment of evil, and, for the most part it is. “However,” (a BIG “however,” and a “however” most of us do not like to hear and will rarely study or teach on); Revelation is also about how we are called to lead faithful lives and manage HIS CHURCH! Among the questions we need to ask ourselves are, *are we being a “harlot” with His Church?* Consider that prostitution is a form of adultery—not just in the sexual sense, but being disloyal to God so we are committing adultery against Him. It is unfaithfulness, and thus corruption and disintegration of our life, faith, and then the family because of the breakdown of the Church resulting in the breakdown of society (Is. 57:3; Jer. 3:8-9; Hos. 2:4; Rev. chaps 1-3; 17:1-5). This is about who you pledge your life to. Is it to your own pride? Or, is it to His Church and the glorification of Christ? Or, do you chase bad trends, sin, and the ways of the world? Are you so concerned with your way of doing things that His Way is pushed aside or skewed? How do you lead your personal life or church? Perhaps you are the “harlot,” or at least acting like it. Consider the struggles of these seven churches and the struggles in your life and church. You may have some prayer and repenting to do! I know I have had to do so, and I will continue to do so!

Remember, if we feed our faith, our doubts and problems will start to starve. If we feed our doubts with sensationalisms and lust, all we will do is distort ourselves from our spiritual formation and in turn, glorify Satan and not Christ!

Real, effectual Eschatology has more to do with spiritual loyalty than about what happens in the future. This makes the question that we all need to ask is to whom and to what are we loyal? Is it fads, trends, and ideas, or is it the precepts of Scripture and the glorification of Christ? Why are Christians so interested in chasing fads? Did you know every theory and prediction of Christ’s return and the patterns of the day leading to His return all have all been wrong?

Some notable Rapture and End Time predictions include the following (From Wikipedia and CRI equip.org):

- 1792 - Shakers calculated this date
- 1844 - William Miller, founder of the *Millerites*, predicted the return of Christ would occur on October 22, 1844, revised after an initial prediction for the 1843/1844 Hebrew Year. The failure of Jesus to appear on this date after his followers had sold all their possessions was referred to as The Great Disappointment.

- June 21, 1981- Maupin, a pastor in Tucson, Arizona, wrote a book predicting the date of the Second Coming. His congregation sold all their belongings and went to a hilltop on that day to await the event.
- 1981 - Chuck Smith un-dogmatically predicted that Jesus would likely return by 1981.
- 1982- Pat Robertson predicted a few years in advance that the world would end in the fall of 1982.
- 1988 - Publication of 88 Reasons why the Rapture is in 1988, by Edgar C. Whisenant.
- 1988 - Hal Lindsey had predicted, in his book "*The Late, Great Planet Earth*," that the Rapture was coming in 1988
- 1989 - Publication of *The Final Shout: Rapture report 1989*, by Edgar Whisenant. More predictions by this author appeared for 1992, 1995, and other years.
- 1992 - Korean group "Mission for the Coming Days" predicted October 28, 1992 as the date for the rapture.
- 1993 - Seven years before the year 2000. The rapture would have to start to allow for seven years of the Tribulation before the Return in 2000. Multiple predictions.
- 1994 - Pastor John Hinkle of Christ Church in Los Angeles predicted June 9, 1994.
- 1994 - Radio evangelist Harold Camping predicted September 27, 1994.
- 1997 - Stan Johnson of the Prophecy Club predicted September 12, 1997.
- 1998 - Marilyn Agee, in *The End of the Age*, predicted May 31, 1998.
- 1999- Jerry Falwell predicted that the Second Coming would probably be within 10 years
- 1999- Nostradamus predicted that "from the sky will come a great King of Terror" (a lot of Christians were using his writings as proof for a 1999 or 2000 year return of Christ.)
- 2000- Michael Drosnin, author of "*The Bible Code*," found a hidden message in the Pentateuch (the first five books in the Bible) that predicts that World War III, involving a worldwide atomic holocaust, will start in 2000 or perhaps 2006.

- 2007- September 13, 2007- Paul Sides predicted that Christ would return, (He is very popular on the internet.)
- 2007- Hal Lindsey (he says currently no longer makes specific predictions about the end of the world). In his revised book *The Late Great Planet Earth* he did predict the battle of Armageddon in 2000 and the second coming of Christ in 2007

These do not include the countless ones from the TV preacher crowd, cultists, the nuts, and Y2K for the year 2000...

Another fad we tend to chase is trends on how to lead and manage His Church. Most of these are like chasing the harlot while ignoring the beckoning of Christ and His Way. We seek to water down His Holy Word to attract people—just as the devil manipulates people to trick them to his ways. All the while, we are called to disciple, teach, and worship Christ as Lord...and do it His Way. People have lost all of their positions, left churches in disgust when it did not happen, and have left a blight in Christianity. This is out-of-control eschatological thinking, and can be a real threat to the peace and stability of our nation and world.

Being a *harlot* in Revelation means we are engaged in and promoting apostasy! What about factions, gossip, and pride? These are the things that God hates the most and cause the greatest destruction to any given church—something even Satan himself could never do. Point? We are the real enemy of enmity, our sins building and conniving and converging upon one another as we chase our theories and ignore Christ and His supremacy, precepts, and call. When we fight amongst ourselves and chase trends that are contrary to Christ, His call, and His commands, we are the *antichrist* of John's Epistles! Just look up the word *antichrist* in a concordance, and read the passages associated to it! By the way, it is not in Revelation (Rev. 2:18-29; 14:6-13; 17:1-18; 18:1-24; 19:1-10; 1 John 2:17-23; 4:3; 2 John 1: 6-8)!

God is calling you and me—those who lead and pastor churches, who influence people in the church, who sit on committees, teach, or like to flee from manipulating and gossiping or making up sensationalism behind the scenes—to wake up and SEEK HIM, not ourselves or ideas or plans or trends!

Are you a committed Christian or a surrendered Christian?

Are you waiting for the *Rapture*? Are you concerned about the tribulation, when it will happen, and if you have to go through it or not? Does one theory of end times have you captivated while others make you mad? Is this what fuels your faith? Is this where your time is spent? If so, take a hard look in prayer and at the Scriptures. What is God really calling your focus to be? Look at Galatians chapter five, the Book of James, or any book of the Bible. Read it through, ask inductive questions to the text, and watch your faith grow and your life be transformed by the real indwelling of His Word and

Spirit. If you are just fueled by emotional drama and sensationalism, your faith is weak and on a thin bed of ice on a hot day. There is nothing to hold or shape you, nothing to transform you and build faith, character, and spiritual and emotional maturity. Yes, excitement is fun and we do need it from time to time, but real faith is fueled in the crucible of our walk in Him and His work in us. It is not about what the trends are; it is what Jesus Christ is doing in you and your church. Do not be distracted from what true faith and real Christian living is all about!

The main point of Biblical, Exegetical Eschatology is to tell us not to be discouraged, but remain faithful and vigilant. We are to live our lives as if Christ were coming tomorrow, or preparing and planning as if He were coming a thousand years from now. We are not to be preoccupied with the details and trivialities. That is why Jesus did not give them to us. Rather, our faith development and steadfastness are far more impacting and real for ourselves and others around us!

We need to read the Bible so it is more impacting to us and so we can draw out more information for personal edification and teaching. We also have to be careful that our interpretation of Scripture is accurate in word and meaning before we make an application to it! We are never to ignore His words, and absolutely never to replace them with ours! It is not about what we think or wish for; it is about His will and His timing! Jesus can come at any time; He is not bound by the limits of our understanding of Eschatology. He is God, and His timing and control are sovereign!

Revelation and Exegetical Eschatology are about our genuine discipleship and growth in Christ and how He impacts us so we can impact others. In His time, it will be clear without dispute (Acts 1:7). Revelation continues to add to our spiritual growth and faithfulness and encourage the Church through persecutions and the daily stresses of life. What we have to know is plainly what we need to know. We do not need to know what He has not yet revealed, as our duty is to our spiritual formation and the expansion of the Kingdom, not idle speculations and argumentations. The purpose for our lives here is to learn and grow in Him over any theological agenda. What we learn in our preparations is far more valuable than what will come about. To live in a sin-infused world is difficult and we need the Savior and Lord to guide us through it. Our lives, circumstances, and experiences will bring us trials and testing before we learn the lessons we are taught. What we learn from Him will help us be vigorous, victorious, and able to overcome anything life or Satan can throw at us.

Do not be distracted from that to which Christ has called you! Do not waste your time in the particulars of *eschatology*; it really is not important. Christ commands us to know Him and make Him known, to grow in Him and help others grow, to worship Him and help others worship Him, too. If we spend our time in the debate of *eschatology*, we will ignore His more vital calls, such as evangelism, discipleship, and our own growth in Him!