



new creation teaching ministry: tuesday night studies 2009

# the things we firmly believe

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## Study 20: The Future and Christ

### Definitions<sup>1</sup>

#### Eschatology

1. The branch of theology that is concerned with the end of the world or of humankind.
2. A belief or a doctrine concerning the ultimate or final things, such as death, the destiny of humanity, the Second Coming, or the Last Judgment.

#### Apocalypse

1. any of a class of Jewish or Christian writings that appeared from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 350 and were assumed to make revelations of the ultimate divine purpose.
2. a prophetic revelation, esp. concerning a cataclysm in which the forces of good permanently triumph over the forces of evil.
3. any revelation or prophecy.
4. any universal or widespread destruction or disaster: *the apocalypse of nuclear war*.

#### Hope

1. to look forward to with desire and reasonable confidence.
2. to believe, desire, or trust

### Some questions:

- What will happen to this world? What will it be like?
- What happens when we die?
- What will happen to me tomorrow/the years to come?
- What do you hope for in life?
- Is the world hopeless?
- What are your hopes in life based/built on?

These are important questions that take much of societies (our) time and energy in trying to secure some answers/certainty in the world.

Human beings are future orientated. We have an inbuilt sense of the goodness of the world and that we should be moving closer to it.

#### Views of history:

1. cyclic: history keeps going round and round with **us** working hard to create better circumstances for ourselves eg reincarnation, peace processes – till next war then more peace processes etc – ultimately a big dead end!
2. linear: there is an end or goal that **God** is bringing all creation to.

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<sup>1</sup> dictionary.com

## The End Things

Apocalyptic texts often use lots of symbolism, pictures and figurative language. This has lent itself to lots of bizarre, weird and strange stuff out there regarding the end times!

Our approach to these scriptures need not be any different than to other parts of the Bible. The end times are not some kind of new theology that is inconsistent or disconnected with the rest of the scriptures. It must be seen as the continuation of the story of God working in history, and therefore has the same themes of creation, salvation, people and the kingdom of God.

WARNING: interpreters of the prophets are not more authoritative than the prophets themselves.

The End Times are actually God's times/things and so are consistent with God's character and being.

## Hope

Hope is an essential factor of our lives, it affects the here and now.

Is our hope well founded? Is it based on reality as the scriptures teach it, or some fantasy that we build up without, and therefore in opposition to, God?

So our understanding of the future, and what is in store, is essential to our well being as people.

## **Hope and Prophecy**

Prophecy:

- is generally exhorting and encouraging a particular course of action e.g. to repent and turn back to God.
- predicts certain actions, and in doing so gives us a knowledge of God (his faithfulness) and establishes hope i.e. that God is true and reliable.
- is the action of the Father, Son and Spirit
- has at its heart 'the testimony of Jesus' or 'the witness of Christ' – it speaks of and looks forward to Christ and his works of the Cross.

Revelation 19:10

At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! **For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**"

Our hope is based on the promises of God that come to us through prophesy. God's promises only make sense in the context of the life and history of the people of God.

Amos 3:7

Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

God has promises and plans for us!

## **What has God promised?**

Many of God's promises we have by faith, not by sight. They are not 'complete', so we wait in sure hope!

The hope of:

### 1) justification

Gal 5:5-6

But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

Rom 5:1-5

5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

### 2) salvation

1 Thess 5:8-9

8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

Eph 6:17-18

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

### 3) eternal life

Titus 1:1-3

1:1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness- 2 a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, 3 and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour,

Titus 3:5-8

He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

### 4) resurrection

Acts 24:14-16

I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, 15 and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

### 5) glory

Rom 5:1-5

5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Col 1:27

27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

### 6) inheritance

Eph 1:18-19

18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

## **Christ and Eschatology**

Since Christ is bringing all things to their fulfilment he is the Lord of the future. We will look at this from the views of:

### 1) Christ and Creation

Col 1:15-18, John 1:1-4, 1 Cor 8:6, Heb 1:1-4

The climax of the end times is the renewal of creation and linked with the redemption of all creation including us from our sin (Romans 8).

### 2) Christ and the people of God

In the OT the one to come (Jesus) was hidden under a veil from the people of God (Israel).

1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 1 Peter 1:10-12

In the NT there are no veils. He is the Messiah, Son, King. The Church is the new community, members who come in repentance and faith are of the 'new humanity'.

“Our main point in developing this theme is to show that at the end–time, when the people of God will be sealed, and will inhabit the new heavens and the new earth, that this will be the eschatological conclusion to the history of the people of God.”<sup>2</sup>

There is a goal/end point for everything as we know it!

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<sup>2</sup> The Things We Firmly Believe p254.

1. Christ is the substance of Old Testament prophesy with eschatological implications:

(a) the 'seed', God with us:

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Galatians 3:16

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

(b) King and Messiah: Psalm 2

(c) Lord: Psalm 110

(d) Servant: Isaiah 53

(e) Prophet: Deuteronomy 18

2. Christ is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophesy

This is done in his birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension. E.g. Matthew's gospel – lots of OT quotes.

Christ is also bringing his work to its fulfilment at the end of the age:

Hebrews 10:12-14

12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Philippians 2:9-11

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. 28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

### Christ is Lord of the Future

He is coming to judge. Because of his resurrection, ours is also secured (1 Corinthians 15). All the end things rely on Jesus for their happening.

‘In passing we may note that the Lord at the right hand of God intercedes for his own, so that they need not fear the present, nor – for that matter – the future. It is his present reigning which is the source of so much powerful hope for the present and the future. That the future is in his hands is powerful comfort for his people.’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Things We Firmly Believe p260