

# The Pilgrims' Practice of Eschatology

1 Peter 4:7-11

*The Eighteenth Sermon on First Peter*

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What is eschatology? This is a compound word made up of two Greek words, *eschatos*, last, and *logoi*, words. So eschatology is words or teaching about the end. So we think about the Second Coming of Jesus when we think about eschatology. That's what the word means but how is it understood today? We think of "the end times." We think of end times' prophets. We think of charts and dates. We think of people like Hal Lindsey, Jack Van Impe, and Chuck Smith. We think of the *Left Behind* series of books.

But what we see here in Peter's words is that he speaks of eschatology not for our speculation but for our edification and our sanctification. It's not so much about what will happen in the end but how that end affects the here and now. Notice that Peter doesn't use eschatology to call us to flee the world and to gaze up waiting for Jesus. Eschatology is practical. Eschatology is a call to action. Eschatology gives our lives meaning and purpose in the here and now.

He tells us **the end of all things is at hand** (v. 7). The word **end** is *telos*, an end, emphasizing a climactic moment, and a goal, emphasizing a purpose. Think of running a race. The end line is the end of the race but it's also the goal of the runner. How can he say **the end of all things is at hand**? He can say this because Jesus' work on the cross, in his resurrection, and finally at his ascension has inaugurated the last days (1 Cor. 10:11) and in fact the last hour (1 John 2:18).

And this all throughout the New Testament there is a call to action for us as believers because the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is immanent (Rom. 13:11-12; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:23-25; Jas. 5:7-8; Rev. 1:3; 22:10).

Tonight I want to look at Peter's teaching on *the pilgrims' practice of eschatology* with you. And note how Peter says the end of all things impacts our here and now in three ways:

1. ***Eschatology Impacts Praying (v. 7)***
2. ***Eschatology Impacts Loving (vv. 8-9)***
3. ***Eschatology Impacts Serving (vv. 10-11)***

### **Eschatology Impacts Praying (v. 7)**

Peter tells us that *eschatology impacts praying* when he says, **Therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers** (v. 7). Think about it; if you are drunk from alcohol, you can't think clearly. Spiritually speaking, as believers Peter is saying that if our lifestyles are irreverent, then we can't pray clearly. And he makes this connection between thinking clearly about Jesus' coming again and our praying. He's saying to you and me, "God is bringing everything to a close. Now cry out in dependence upon him."

For example, if you knew that tomorrow morning the President, your favorite sports hero, or your favorite person was coming to meet you at home, what would you do? I would think you would practice what you would say. In the same way we know Jesus is coming. Are we praying? It's more than just practicing

the right words, praying is talking to him now unseen, but when he comes face to face.

And so there needs to be urgency to our praying, beloved. I know we are all busy. I know we think the church is in good hands because it belongs to Christ. I know we forget to pray. But we need to be desperate. “Lord, you are coming soon; please bring my mom to faith. Lord, when you come it is to judge, please save my friend.”

### **Eschatology Impacts Loving (vv. 8–9)**

Peter also tells us that *eschatology impacts loving*. And he’s not speaking of love towards the world here, but especially that love among ourselves that Jesus said was the hallmark sign of our conversion to the world. Peter says in verse 8, **Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins**. Our Lord warned that in the end the love of many would grow cold (Matt. 24:12). We saw that in our study of the church in Ephesus from Revelation 2. They lost their first love of Christ, which led to a loss of love for each other and finally the world.

Then Peter gives us a tangible way to show our love for one another: **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling** (v. 9). What better way to show love than by inviting one another into your homes? Jesus has shown hospitality to us by welcoming us into God’s kingdom and he will show that when we enter his

presence supremely, and so now we must show this to one another. Look at Romans 15 with me.

Brothers and sisters, do you see what this means? Hospitality is a fruit of the Spirit's work among us. The New Testament exhorts pastors to be hospitable and exhorts each of us to be hospitable. What are we waiting for? "But I didn't clean my house, my house is too small, I live too far away, I'm too shy, I don't have time." All begin with "I," but Peter says do this **without grumbling**.

### **Eschatology Impacts Serving (vv. 10–11)**

Finally, Peter says *eschatology impacts serving*. Look at verse 10: **As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.** A **gift** is *charisma*, which means it is a gift of grace. And notice that Peter says **each** because God has given to each and every believer a spiritual gift. And we are to use these gifts to **serve** each other. In the New Testament this verb **serve** can be used of providing meals for others (Matt. 8:15), visiting those in prison (Matt. 25:44), providing financial support (Luke 8:3), and serving each other in general as well. Thus Peter calls us to serve not to self-serve. We are called to a culture of ministry to each other not the "selfie" culture that serves me.

In verse 11 he gives us two examples of gifts that serve others: speaking and serving. First, **whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God.** He's speaking here of public preaching of the Word of God. The **oracles of God** are the

words God gave to his people (Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12). “But I don’t have that gift.” You don’t need it to serve. Look at what he says as well: **whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.** Anything you can do to serve others is a spiritual gift. It doesn’t need to be flashy and it doesn’t even need to be public. Can you pray? Can you write a note of encouragement? Can you give a hug? Can you make a phone call? What can you do? Then do it! And do so knowing that this is a gift given to you to serve others **by the strength that God supplies.**

Christ is coming again, beloved, and when he does all things as we know them will come to an end and a new heavens and new earth will be ushered in. Until then, and in light of that coming, pray, love, and serve. Why? As Peter says, **in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.** Let us pray.