

# The Coming of the Kingdom

SEEING THE GLORIOUS HOPE OF THE GOSPEL IN A STUDY OF LAST THINGS

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Why is this important?

# What are we studying?

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Eschatology: study of last things (from Greek *eschatos*, “last”)

- What is in the future in God's plan?
- What is the relationship of the present to the future?
- How can we discover what the Bible teaches when there are so many views?
- How does this help us live Christianly now?

# The Future Is Crucial to the Christian Faith

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- Where do we go when we die (heaven, hell, other??)?
- The return of Christ
- Resurrection of the body
- Final judgment
- The eternal state

*Getting these things wrong means denying the Christian faith and overthrowing the gospel.*

## 2 Timothy 2:16-18

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16 But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

# Some Details Are Not So Crucial

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- The specific signs of Christ's coming
- The place of various nations in the fulfillment of prophecy
- The timing of the rapture
- The nature and timing of the "thousand years" in Revelation 20
- Are the locusts in Revelation actually helicopters?
- Do all dogs go to heaven?

*Christians can and do disagree on these issues.*

*"All Scripture is profitable." If the Bible speaks to these issues, we should not avoid them just because people disagree. We want to profit from what God has revealed.*

# The Current Landscape in Eschatology

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- The Reformed tradition tends to deemphasize eschatology.
- Modern American tradition is influenced by a relatively new approach called dispensationalism.
  - Tendency to overemphasize details of eschatology
  - Many books and study Bibles published from this perspective
  - Many Christians think this is the only Christian viewpoint

*Theology without eschatology is like a church without a steeple pointing to heaven.*

# Eschatology Impacts Our View of God

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- God's glory is to be revealed in an awesome way!
- God's sovereignty in history and over individuals
- God's goodness/severity
- God's infinity

# Eschatology Informs Our Understanding of Salvation

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- redemptive history
- what we've obtained now
- fullness of salvation -- redemption of bodies, earth, etc.

# Eschatology Fuels Our Sanctification

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- hope (expectation!) an integral attitude for sanctification --- this world isn't all there is!
- Holy Spirit as downpayment
- Scriptural motives provided for pursuing holiness

# Eschatology Shapes Our Worldview

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- Where are we in God's redemptive plan?
- What kind of experience can we expect in this stage of redemptive history?
- What is important now given our view of the future?

# Eschatology Tests Our Hermeneutic

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*Hermeneutic: method of interpreting the Bible*

Eschatology is a laboratory for testing and developing our approach to interpreting the Bible.

- Does it create or resolves tensions in our understanding of various texts in the Scriptures?
- Is the result Christ-centered and Christ-honoring?
- Does it lead to greater motivations for Christian living?

# Romans 8:18-25

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18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

# 2 Peter 3:10-15

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10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

11 ¶ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,

# 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

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13 ¶ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

# 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

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1 ¶ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. 5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

6 ¶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

11 ¶ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

# Conclusion and Preview

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- Eschatology is central to the teaching that Jesus intends for our blessing.
- Preview: We are in the middle of a plan that is still unfolding. We will look next week at how this plan is unfolding through God's covenants in history.