

**General Topics :: Why Study Eschatology? - Samuel Whitefield****Why Study Eschatology? - Samuel Whitefield - posted by docs (), on: 2019/3/8 14:34**

Why Study Eschatology?

Some people wonder if the study of eschatology (the "end times") matters at all. However, this is usually not due to a study of the topic itself, but rather a reaction to the abuses of the study of eschatology. There is much that could be written about eschatology, but for those who are wrestling with whether they should study it all, here are a few basic reasons why the study of eschatology should be part of our spiritual diet.

The Person of Jesus

1The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants "things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, (Revelation 1:1 NKJV)

First of all the study of eschatology is the study of the person of Jesus. The book of Revelation opens up by telling us that it is primarily the revelation of the person of Jesus not of events. Those events are not disconnected from the person of Jesus. The first coming of Jesus did not replace the second coming, it set the stage for it by offering mercy before judgment. Therefore if we do not understand Jesus' second coming there are key parts of His person that we do not understand. It is significant that there are over 150 chapters in Scripture describing the unique dynamics of the hour when Jesus comes and 89 chapters in the gospel. The gospel is not just what Jesus did, but also what Jesus will do.

The foundational hope of both the Old Testament and the New Testament is the appearing of Messiah to rule the nation and deliver His people. This event is our great hope and the most emphasized event in Scripture. It is so emphasized in Scripture that the mystery of His first coming was not even understood until after He came and expounded the Scriptures to us (Luke 24:27).

It is Part of Jesus' Plan of Discipleship for the Church

2Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 3But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 4Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Matthew 24:42-44 NKJV)

Jesus gives His longest teaching on the end times in Matthew 24 and 25 and He repeatedly emphasizes that the church is to be prepared for the end. He emphasizes that when the end comes it will come so suddenly that there will not be time to prepare for it. Therefore, we are to be in a constant state of preparedness for the climax of the age (Matthew 24:42-44; 46, 50; 25:5-10). This means we must understand the main themes and events that will occur at the end. In other words, the end times are part of Jesus' pattern of discipleship for the church. We are to prepare for these events in each generation as though we were that generation.

18Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. (1 John 2:18 NKJV)

The apostle John explains for us why Jesus taught the church that "there will be "antichrists" in every generation. In other words, the things that climax suddenly in an unparalleled way just before the return of Jesus are also the essential issues in every generation. Every generation will be faced with pressure to not be faithful to Jesus and with rulers who are "antichrist." If the church sets its focus on its great hope, the return of Jesus, and prepares to face great pressure it will succeed in every generation. This means we must understand the main themes of the end times because they apply in some measure for every believer.

Paul Expected us Understand the End

2For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. 3For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5You are all sons of

light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thessalonians 5:2-6 NKJV)

The apostle Paul described the coming of the Lord as a thief in the night, but only for those who were unaware. Paul expected that the church would be aware of the times and seasons that surround the Lord's coming so that His appearing would not surprise them. Jesus had the same expectation of our ability to understand the times and seasons (Matthew 24:33). The fact that Paul expected the church in Thessalonica, a church he spent little time with, to be able to understand the events related to the coming of the Lord emphasizes all the more how foundational understanding eschatology was for the apostle Paul.

#### It is Necessary to Build the Church Properly

Understanding eschatology is what gives us the ability to build the church strategically according to God's plan. When we survey the main eschatological passages in Scripture it gives us many descriptions of how the people of God are functioning and the main pressures they are facing at the return of Jesus. In any labor we undertake, wisdom demands that we first get a clear picture of our end goal. For example, no one begins a long journey without deciding first where we want to go. Jesus warned His followers to fully understand where following Him would lead before they committed themselves to Him (Luke 14:28-32). Understanding how the age ends show us what the church must look like at the end. When we understand what the church looks like at the end of the age, we understand God's definition is of a mature church. Understanding that enables us to build towards a clear finish line.

#### The Great Hope of the New Testament Church Should be our Great Hope

11For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (Titus 2:11-13 NKJV)

The return of Jesus was the great hope of the New Testament church (Acts 1:11; Acts 28:20; Romans 8:18-25; 1 Corinthians 15:19; Galatians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 10:37; 1 Peter 1:13; 2 Peter 3:4-14; 1 John 3:2-3) and was also their motivation towards holy living (2 Peter 3:11-14, 1; Timothy 6:14-16; 2 Timothy 1:12). In His wisdom God gave this church to us as an example for the church in succeeding generations. We are to follow their witness and set our hope where the New Testament church set it.

#### The Primary Storyline is Simple to Understand

It is important to note that the primary storyline in Scripture is relatively easy to understand. There is no doubt that there will be many surprises at Jesus's coming, but the Bible was written to be understood, not to be obscure. Given just how much of the Bible focuses on the end times, we must know that God intended those passages of Scripture to be relatively straightforward. God never intended that we ignore a significant amount of Scripture. There are mysteries in some eschatological passages, but most of it is not mysterious.

#### The Problem with Studying Eschatology

If eschatology is so useful for the church, then why do many avoid it? Eschatology is usually avoided for two reasons. First, many find it mysterious and difficult to understand. However, if we take the Scripture at face value we will find that the basics of eschatology are relatively straightforward and consistent. That is why both Jesus and Paul (Matthew 24, 25; 1 Thessalonians 5) considered it part of the diet of the local church. Secondly, the bigger issue is how we respond to eschatology. The study of eschatology often gets a bad name from people who respond to it in an unbiblical way. When people withdraw from the life of the church or become obsessed about small details in Scripture but are unconcerned about the daily life of the church it is an unbiblical response to eschatology. Sadly a few have responded in an unbiblical way and this has discouraged many from studying eschatology at all.

When we study eschatology we will find the church facing unparalleled opposition (Matthew 24:21-22), seeing great harvest (Revelation 7:9-14), experiencing great power, and enduring great suffering (Daniel 11:32-35; Revelation 12:10-11). If we respond properly to eschatology we will build the church towards these themes and a church focused on these themes will be healthy and strong in any generation. Therefore it is important that we both study eschatology and also respond to it properly. This is something that is true in any area of study in the Scripture. It is always both the study a subject and the way we apply it in the local church that determines whether it build the church as God intends or ends up causing

g confusion.

Eschatology was given for us as our great hope and to help us build the church. It was not meant to be a source of confusion or simply as a topic of intellectual curiosity that is divorced from the life of the local church. If we want the church to be all that God intends it to be, then we must understand the end of the mission of the church in this age and the nature of our great hope just as Jesus and the apostle Paul exhorted us to.

(Samuel Whitefield - Jan 3, 2014)

**Re: Why Study Eschatology? - Samuel Whitefield - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2019/3/13 19:24**

I know many people who refuse to get into studying eschatology because too many "scholars" spiritualize everything so that the listeners feel like it is a riddle that only a few can figure out and since this is not their forte they will leave it alone.

It is my understanding that studying eschatology will go a long ways to keep a person from straying into false doctrines. Having said that there are a lot of prophets out there that will prey upon the unsuspecting as well. Since this is the case one does well to study diligently, comparing scripture with scripture and if the dots do not connect, never fret, in time you will find the missing links and then you will experience a thrill like you rarely experience otherwise.

Studying eschatology for its own sake, one will learn a lot about the nature of God. This also thrills my soul. I learn He is so awesome, challenges my imagination where it will soar to new heights....No other book in my opinion is so doctrinally rich as the book of Revelation. Every time I read/study it I learn something new, see a word I missed before that presents a new spin on the subject. Lots of "wow!" moments. Love it.

Teens can get into it as well. Our 17 year old granddaughter is utterly fascinated with prophecy, loves to discuss it, study it. This interest was sparked last summer at Vacation Bible School when they had a substitute teacher who loves the subject. He started talking about it, got the students so interested they asked him to forget the lesson and discuss prophecy, instead. Love that.

My understanding. And opinion, of course!

Sandra