

Our Brilliant Future: 'Where's It All Leading?'

by Greg Herrick

Greg Herrick explores the complexities of end times theology, emphasizing the importance of hope, readiness, and unity among Christians despite differing interpretations.

Scripture: Isaiah 46:10, Matthew 24:21, Matthew 25:46, John 5:28, Acts 1:11, Romans 11:26, Philippians 3:20, Revelation 20:1

Topics: "Eschatology", "Second Coming"

Description

Greg Herrick preaches on the study of the end times, emphasizing the differences and agreements among Bible-believing Christians. The sermon delves into crucial areas of agreement such as the second coming of Christ, the response to His coming, the resurrection of all peoples, and the final state of the wicked and the righteous. Points of disagreement include the rapture, the millennial kingdom, the tribulation period, and the role of national Israel in the end times.

Transcript

I am God and there is no other...I make known the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10)

Meditation: "He Will Wipe Away Every Tear"

We come now to the final study in this series, i.e., the study of the end times. In every area of theology there are differences of opinion among Bible believing Christians simply because we lack sufficient understanding or Scripture itself seems unclear (e.g., 1 Cor 15:29). Nowhere is this more true than in the study of the end times. Nonetheless, there are also crucial areas of agreement among Christians and we will do our best to examine them as well. In fact, we will start with them first.

Points of Agreement

1. Read Acts 1:11. What does the Bible teach regarding the second coming of Christ? See also Matthew 24:30, 44, 50; 25:31; Mark 13:32-33; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 1 Peter 4:7; Revelation 22:12. NOTE: The fact that his return could be at any time, does not necessarily mean that it will be soon (as we think of "soon"). If you do not understand this, please take the time to think it through. There is a huge difference between the two!!

2. What should our response be to the coming of Christ? See Philippians 3:20 and Revelation 22:21.

3. What does John also say will happen at the end when Christ returns? Read John 5:28-29.
4. What will follow Christ's return and the resurrection of all peoples? See Matthew 25:31-46.
4. What will be the final state of the wicked and the righteous according to Matthew 25:46, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, and Revelation 20:11-15.
5. Read Matthew 5:22 (18:9); 8:12; 13:42; 22:13; Luke 16:23; Jude 7, 13. How does the Bible describe Hell?
6. Read Hebrews 11:10, 16; 12:22-25; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 7:13-17; 21:1-22:21; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. What do these passages teach us about heaven and our resurrection body? See also the study of "So Great A Salvation" where we talked about the resurrection body.
7. In summary, the Bible teaches and most Christians throughout the history of the church have believed, that Christ will return bodily, visually, suddenly to the earth, after which there will be a general resurrection and judgment. The wicked will be consigned to eternal separation from God in Hell and the righteous, in glorified bodies, will receive eternal life in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Points of Disagreement

There are also some points of disagreement. These usually include: (1) the fact and timing of the rapture; (2) the nature and length of time of the millennial kingdom in Revelation 20; (3) the nature, timing, and extent of the tribulation period; and (4) the role of national Israel in the unfolding of the end times and in the millennium.

1. The term rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 means "to seize," "catch up" or "snatch up." Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50-53. Although some theologians deny that 1 Thess 4:16 teaches a general "catching up" or "rapture" of the saints, this does seem to be the best and most consistent rendering of its meaning. The biggest question for many is not the fact of the rapture in this passage, but it's timing. "When will this happen?" There are several positions on this, and it is impossible to list here all the verses and arguments people use to support their viewpoint.

The following are the most tenable positions: (1) the rapture occurs before the period of the Great Tribulation, which in this schema, is generally thought to last seven years; (2) the rapture occurs at some time during the Great Tribulation (e.g., at the midpoint), and (3) the rapture occurs soon after the Great Tribulation. In the nature of the case, one must be tentative about deciding this issue since there are no texts which appear to state explicitly what the truth is. 2.

Read Revelation 20:1-7. The big questions that surround the meaning of this passage are whether the "thousand years" should be taken literally or not and how such a period in time (i.e., the millennial kingdom) coordinates with the second coming. The typical premillennial answer is that the 1000 years are literal years and Christ will return before that period begins. Indeed, at his return he will usher in his 1000 year reign, in fulfillment, for example, of passages like Psalm 2.

Some premillennialists, however, while maintaining the basic structure of Christ's return after the millennium, nonetheless, argue that the 1000 years may not be precisely 1000 literal years, but simply a reference to an incredibly long period of time. Amillennialists do not regard the thousand years as literal, but often take it as symbolic referring to the period beginning with the ascension and sending of the Spirit

at Pentecost. Postmillennialists do not necessarily take it as a literal thousand years either, but rather argue that a glorious, "millennium-like period" will be gradually ushered in by the church's preaching of the gospel, at the end of which the Lord will return.

For them, the term millennium refers primarily to a quality of time, and only secondarily to a certain length of time. 3. Read Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation 2:22, and 7:14. It appears in these passages that the Bible speaks about a period of unmatched judgment and stress to come on the whole earth (cf. Rev 3:10). This time-period has frequently been referred to as the Great Tribulation. Dispensational theologians often argue that this period fulfills Daniel's seventieth week (Daniel 9:25-27) and should be placed before the return of Christ at which time he will set up his literal, 1000 year earthly kingdom.

Further, they argue that it will last seven years, but that the church will be raptured beforehand. Both amillennialists and postmillennialists, on the other hand, put the Great Tribulation at the end of the church age before the coming of Christ and often associate it with the battle of God and Magog in Revelation 20:8-9. There are some, however, who argue that the Great Tribulation (thlipsis megale,,) simply refers to tribulation the saints have undergone throughout all of church history.

In light of Jesus comments in Matthew 24:21, however, this last position seems to the present writer to be highly unlikely. 4. We come to our last debatable issue, the role of national Israel in the future. Read Romans 11:1-32. There are at least three lines of argument on this issue. First, there are theologians within Dispensationalism who argue that covenants and promises made with national Israel have not yet been fulfilled, but they will be in the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth.

On the other hand, there are amillennial theologians who deny that national Israel has any future in God's program. Largely in light of her disobedience in crucifying Christ, she has been replaced by the church. There are some, however, especially covenant premill theologians, who argue that there is a future for ethnic Israel and that in the last days many Jews will be converted. One of the key questions is when Paul says in Romans 11:26 that "all Israel" will be saved, is he referring to ethnic Jews or to national Israel?

Meditation: What Does This Mean for My Life? Our Great Hope Describe what it means to you that God is in control of the world and bringing it to its grand consummation. We know that Christ could conceivably come at any time, but this in no way means that he will come today or soon for that matter. This is a great error and often leads to a lack of healthy Christian involvement in the world. Therefore, how should we balance the fact that he could come at any time with the Biblical admonition to be prudent and make wise plans for the future?

NOTE: Never forget, that although this world is fallen and as John says under the power of evil one, it is nonetheless God's world and we are to act responsibly in it. We are not to seek, in any sense, an escapist agenda.

Differences among Christians Regarding the End Times

How will you deal with other Christians who differ with you over issues related to the interpretation of the finer points of the end times? Will it do any good to hurl insults and bring into question people's motives? Is this honoring to Christ? I ask this because there has been--over this issue in particular--a lot of mud-slinging among Bible believing Christians for quite a while. Determine now to listen to others, weigh carefully what they say, graciously offer your own version, and pursue unity above all things.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/greg-herrick/our-brilliant-future-wheres-it-all-leading/>

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