

Introduction to the End Time Series

Background

Jim Clark and I have spent one day a week for over three years studying the Scriptures and seeking the Lord for understanding about end time events. We are attempting with the Lord's help to put into writing what we feel that the Holy Spirit has shown us about end time events. We are presenting in this series of lessons a different perspective that what has been taught traditionally by others.

In our study we felt that it was important that we depend completely on the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. As a result we attempted to approach the subject without any preconceived ideas or doctrinal viewpoints. We began to question all that we had been taught concerning end times and soon realized that none of the contemporary positions fully answered the issues presented in the Scriptures.

It is not our intention to trash any doctrinal position but to simply present the understanding that we have come to over the last three years. We believe that we have been led by the Holy Spirit but we do not believe that we now have all of the answers. There are still some areas that we are still wrestling with and trying to fit together. As you read these lessons, you will find some places where we will say that we don't know or that we are still seeking the Lord about this.

We want to be spiritually and intellectually honest with you. Any one who tells you that they have it all figured out is simply lying to you. There are many aspects of end time events that will not be understood until the season of their manifestation in the earth. An example of this would be the seven thunders that spoke in Revelation. John was told to seal them up and not write them down. It would seem then that no one will understand the seven thunders until it is time for the seven thunders to speak.

Foundation for Understanding End Times

Between the two of us (Jim and Art) we have heard many presentations on the end times. However, many of these were like watching the last five minutes of a movie without seeing what went on before. The end times are not stand-alone events even though many preachers and teachers talk as if they are.

We need to remember that God had a plan, a purpose in His heart before He created man and in His foreknowledge He knew what was needed to consummate His plan. The bible tells us that “the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world.” [*Rev.13:8 KJV*] Paul speaks of the “mystery hidden from ages past but now revealed to us” [*1Co 2:7; Eph 3:9; Col 1:26*] There is a revealing and an unfolding of God's plan and purpose throughout history and this needs to be taken into account by anyone seeking to understand the times of the end.

If we have little or no understanding of God's overall plan for the ages, we will find it very difficult to gain understanding about the close of the ages. God is bringing everything that He started before the foundation of the world to a conclusion at the end of this age.

The book of Revelation is an example. Although many teach Revelation as if it is all about the Antichrist and his mark, that is not its purpose. The book begins with “The Revelation of Jesus Christ...” We are told in the Scriptures that God's purpose included the Lamb being slain before the foundation of the world and it ends in a new heaven and a new earth and a new Jerusalem with the

Lamb as the temple and the lamp of the city. [*Rev. 21:22-23*] End Time events are about the Revelation of Jesus Christ **NOT** the revelation of the Antichrist.

Time and Eternity

It is sometimes hard for us to wrap our minds around the difference between time and eternity. Since we live in time it is hard for us to conceive of eternity. We need to remember that time and eternity are different things. Eternity is not just endless time but a different construct altogether. God lives in eternity and has always lived in eternity. However, God created time when He created the time-space continuum. Since time is a created thing it is subject to the laws of creation just as our physical universe is subject to these same laws. Einstein proved the relationship between time and space with his theory of relativity. However, eternity cannot be defined by the rules of science or scientific understanding. Eternity can only be understood with spiritual understanding. It takes the Holy Spirit enlightening our understanding for us to have any valid perception of eternity.

God has foreknowledge because He lives outside of time. He sees all events of time simultaneously. It is impossible for God to be surprised by any event happening in time. God knows what will happen tomorrow even though it is a mystery to us. We are saying all of this to point out the fact that when God decided to accomplish His purpose with our creation, He saw it all from the beginning to the end and everything in between. Everything that God is doing has one purpose from the beginning and is the fulfillment of that purpose at the end. We cannot understand end time events without the perspective of God's purpose.

Defining Terms

For the sake of our understanding in this series of lessons, we need to define terms in such a way that it is clear what it meant and this is especially true of time and eternity. We have to overcome some of the constraints of our minds to begin to comprehend things that are outside of time. Eternity is the dwelling place of God. It is His habitat. He created angels and other beings that are spirit to live in His habitat, which we refer to as Heaven. The Scriptures refer to Heaven as the invisible realm [*Col.1:16*]. At some point in God's purpose, He created a visible realm to be a habitat for another type of creature that was to fulfill God's intent—man. The space-time continuum is the habitat for man, specifically the earth.

Therefore, we can define from our viewpoint the things that happened before man as eternity past and the things that happen after the end of Revelation as eternity future. In between we have to define terms based on which habitat is being referred to. Things happening in the earth (the things visible) and with man relate to time whereas the things happening in Heaven (the things invisible) relate to eternity. This is important because the book of Revelation is filled with scenes that happen on earth and scenes that happen in Heaven.

The Eternal Kingdom

One aspect of God's purpose that has been neglected by the teaching ministries deals with the Kingdom of God. It is important that we have some basic understanding of the Kingdom if we want to understand the end times. Jesus told us that His kingdom was not of this world (the visible realm) [*John 18:36*] but that we are to pray for the Kingdom to come on earth (the visible realm) just as it is in

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Heaven (the invisible realm) [*Mat. 6:10*]. By Rev. 11:15 we are told that when the Seventh Angel sounds “*the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ*”. It would certainly seem then that end time events would include circumstances that would bring this about as part of the purpose of God.

The Scriptures further elaborate on God's purpose in Ephesians.

Eph 1:9-10 NKJV

- (9) having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,
- (10) that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

These verses link several key elements together to the dispensation (administration) of the fullness of the times (end time events)--the mystery of His will, His purpose, His intent to gather all things in Christ, which includes the visible and invisible realms. This is brought to full manifestation in the New Heavens and the New Earth as described at the end of Revelation.

From this we need to understand that none of the events of the end times are out of God's control. The Holy Spirit is working to bring to completion all of God's intent. Some of those who minister about end time events promote fear about the Antichrist and his antics. Others say it doesn't matter because the church will be raptured out and miss the hard times. Both of these groups do a major disservice to the people of God and a proper understanding of our place and function in administration of the fullness of times.

Keep these points in mind as you continue this series on the end times.