

## Nurturing a Biblical End Times View – Part I

### OUR GOAL:

When learning to drive, one of our first priorities is to develop the habit of looking a little further down the road to avoid knee jerk responses. In fact, the higher the speed of the vehicle, be it a car, watercraft, or aircraft, the more important it is to adjust our course with smaller movements. This does not mean we do not have to jerk the wheel now and then to avoid an immediate hazard, but the principles of good driving require us to keep our eyes focused further down the road. The biblical application is equally important. When we are caught up in the immediate, *especially during times of crisis*, our zeal can cause us to oversteer. *Our goal in this session is to look down the road in order to properly respond to the times in which we live.*

### We are going to ask five questions:

- I. WHAT IS GOD DOING IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF HISTORY AND PROPHECY?
- II. WHERE HAVE GOD'S PEOPLE SEEN THEMSELVES TRADITIONALLY IN PROPHECY?
- III. HOW CAN WE BE SURE WE WON'T FALL INTO THE HISTORICIST ERROR?
- IV. WHAT ABOUT OUR PRESENT PROPHETIC STATE?
- V. WHAT ARE WE TO DO IN LIGHT OF THIS?

Let's go to work. We begin by asking ourselves:

### I. WHAT IS GOD DOING IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF HISTORY & PROPHECY?

**A. To understand what God is doing we must begin with a long view.** In these two sessions (today and in a month), I want to ask you to come with me as we take a broader view of both history and prophecy in order help us respond wisely to the present circumstance. I am going to ask you to prepare to do some thinking. I want to begin with some broad sweeping themes before we nail things down to our immediate times.

When growing our world view we need two perspectives. We marry a long view of the past (history) with a long view of the future (prophecy) and seeking to do this in a way which truly reflects who God is and what He is doing. In this session we are scoping the future. In the next, we'll tie in the past.

**B. An example of a long view.** When I ask you to take a long view of scripture you may ask, *"Jim, exactly what are you saying? How can we do this? Can you give me an example of how to think this way?"* I thought you would never ask. Let me give you an example of beginning with the broad or long view.

Turn with me to the seventh and final doxology in the book of Revelation. You will find it Revelation 19:1-2. As you turn there, I'd like to point out that I will be cherry picking from chapters 17 through 22, so you might want to keep your Bibles open in that neighborhood. Look now at verses 1 and 2 of chapter 19.

*“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”*

(Revelation 19:1,2, KJV 1900)

1. We could say, wow, this is a wonderful doxology, echo its words, and leave it at that. That would be correct, but it would be a short view.
2. Or, we would take it a step further, and ask, why are these verses placed exactly at this point? Our response would not be long coming! We are rejoicing over the fall of Babylon! This is no small celebration! So, we would need to investigate Babylon. Inevitably, someone would want to bring up the point, is this a literal city or is this Rome, or is this discussion rooted even more deeply into the plan and program of God throughout history? By asking these questions we have broadened our view, and, as a plus, we're not quite as interested in bickering over whether or not Bagdad is the real city of Babylon, as stimulating as that discussion may be.
3. We have not finished. We have not yet looked far enough down the road. Look at those verse again and notice how the doxology is constructed. These are mega words, folks! Look at those key accolades:
  - We have Alleluia (transliterated from the OT as 'praise Yahwh!') – The word Alleluia is never used in the New Testament until this very doxology! Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of this praise exercise.
  - The next word is Salvation – that, of course, speaks to redemption!
  - Then, glory and honor – that addresses the question, why did God allow this whole plan of history to unfold? He had a grand *doxological* theme in view!
  - Then, we have power! That, if course, speaks to His absolute might and unspeakable wonders.
  - And then, there is truth and righteousness, and judgment! These are also *forensic* words. Many folks can read the Bible over and never catch on to the point that the entire body of this book rests on forensics. This book is a witness to God's absolute legal justice and righteous reign.

Now, we have broadened our prophetic view. In this doxological self-revelation of our God we are witnessing all the grand themes of history rushing and melding together into one grand crescendo! I love it when my dispensational friends and my Calvinist friends debate the ultimate purpose of history! The one group says history is doxological! That is the end purpose,

they declare. The other group says, no! It is soteriological, it is redemptive! Such a silly debate! Do you want to know the full purpose of history? These two verses contain it in its fulness. We have the triumph of history in the fall of Babylon and this grand all-encompassing doxology of history as the battle consummates!

And, how does this long view affect my world view and ministry? I will not be quite so consumed with straining at gnats. I will mitigate my debates over whether literal Babylon will be rebuilt and, instead, focus on the biblical *theme* of Babylon. I will minimize my deliberations about whether the mark of the beast will be an implanted microchip and start meditating on why antichrist insists on having a mark. Has it occurred to us, for example, is that antichrist is counterfeiting another mark?

Now, we can better articulate our broad prophetic view: God is bringing glory to Himself and to His Son. He is witnessing His salvation, His glory, His honor, His power, His righteousness, and His judgment. This will come to a consummation at the judgment of Babylon, Armageddon, the coming of the New Jerusalem, and the ultimate inauguration of the eternal state. That is very, very big stuff. Now, for the next step.

## **II. WE CONTINUE BY ASKING, WHERE HAVE GOD'S PEOPLE TRADITIONALLY SEEN THEMSELVES IN PROPHECY?**

So, will the destruction of Babylon take place today? Are we in the end times? Is this it? Is the whole world staging for this grand finale? Where does the body of Christ stand on this issue? After all, I need to know where I am if I am to conform my life and direction to God's plan for this world? Where in the world are we?

It will not surprise most of us to know that Christians have been asking this question since the time of Christ. During the last two thousand years, three groups of prophetic positions have arisen. They have funny names, but they are important for us to understand. These groups are the preterists, the historicists, and the futurists. Now, hold on to this, it's worth learning about.

**A. The preterists.** The preterists have been around for hundreds of years, but, frankly, they are small potatoes. They fancy the idea that all prophecy has been fulfilled since 70 A.D., or at least by 300 A.D. They are still around, but because they do not have a consistent hermeneutic, few take them seriously. Contemporary preterists believe we are in the eternal state, and Satan is bound. Now that is an exceptionally large pill to swallow. At the expense of insulting them, we will just ignore preterists in this present study.

However, we cannot ignore the next two groups. They are the historicists and the futurists. Isn't this exciting? Well, you are in one of these groups.

**B. The historicists.** A great majority of Christians down through the ages, have been historicists. Do not let the name throw you now. When looking at Ezekiel, and Daniel, and the Gospels, and Revelation, the historicists, *regardless of when they*

*have lived*, have been pretty much convinced that they are (or were) at the end of the march of history and the consummation of all things is upon us, or almost upon us.

- For example, during and following the worldwide persecution of believers by Catholics, Christians were certain that the sitting pope was the antichrist. That would seem very sensible if you were living then because the Pope looked very much like that first apocalyptic horseman.
- Or, to come closer to our time, most of the American millennial cults, bred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are classic examples of historicists. Jehovah's Witnesses have been in the seven-year tribulation for over a hundred years, now! Seventh Day Adventists believe they are in the consummation.
- David Koresh would be even more contemporary. All of these little apocalyptic cults which rise and fall are historicist. Virtually all of them begin with misinterpreting a few passages in Daniel.
- QAnon is a contemporary example. Word on the street is that QAnon is taking on all the cult like properties that accompany historicists.<sup>1</sup>
- So, get this now. The historicist, then, believes we are either *in or on the immediate cusp of* the consummation of history as we know it and the final destruction of Babylon.

Now, let's look at the third group of Christians.

**C. The futurists.** Futurists believe that the prophecies of Ezekiel, Daniel, the Gospels, and Revelation are literal events which will yet take place in the future.<sup>2</sup> No aspect of those prophecies are presently being fulfilled. The operative word here is future. Now, hopefully, you are a futurist. Futurists are the only *consistently literal* interpreters of the Word of God. Did you pick up on the word literal?

But we must admit, this does raise an interesting question! It recalls the mantra of the paranoid man. "I may be paranoid, but that doesn't mean someone couldn't be after me!" I may be a futurist, but sooner or later, someday, *we will be in the*

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia: QAnon, or simply Q, is a disproven and discredited far-right conspiracy theory alleging that a secret cabal of Satan-worshipping, cannibalistic pedophiles is running a global child sex-trafficking ring and plotted against former U.S. president Donald Trump while he was in office.

<sup>2</sup> Futurism is a Christian eschatological view that interprets portions of the Book of Revelation, the Book of Ezekiel, and the Book of Daniel as future events in a literal, physical, apocalyptic, and global context. [Wikipedia](#)

*consummation!* Who is to say we are not now *entering* the consummation? I am guessing you already know the answer, and it is a delightful one.

### III. HOW, THEN, CAN WE BE SURE WE WON'T FALL INTO THE HISTORICIST ERROR?

God has provided us with a marvelous safeguard so that we will not fall into the historicist trap. It is called the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture of the church. This wonderful teaching arises out of a strict commitment to literal interpretation, so we would believe it even if we did not understand its purposes. It is the teaching that our Lord Jesus Christ could appear *at any moment in time*. The dead in Christ will arise and we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). What makes this teaching unique is that it *could have* occurred at any point in history and *may yet* occur at any time.

Well-meaning believers sometimes think the pre-tribulation rapture is a minor issue and, in the name of charity, gladly surrender it. They teasingly describe themselves as *pan-rapturist*, quipping that it will all *pan out* in the end. Some will go so far as to say that it would be unlike God not to cleanse the garments of His defiled church before taking her unto Himself in wedded bliss. Based on the character of God, they dismiss the rapture and opt for believers to experience at least some aspect of the consummation as a spiritual cathartic of sorts. Of course, that argument is easily nullified, but the point is, it is based neither on scripture nor the character of God.

If you have not fortified yourself biblically, with the doctrine of the rapture stop in your tracks and get this matter settled! Get help from your pastor or consider reading a book such as [The Popular Handbook on the Rapture](#).<sup>3</sup> Our purpose in today's study is to help you understand the role of the rapture before you give away something which is not yours to give away. The rapture is not a dangling participle in God's essay on prophecy. The rapture doesn't just hang out there to alleviate the fears of Christians who don't want to go through the tribulation! The rapture fulfills numerous purposes in God's plan but try to hold on to these two important truths:

**A. The rapture has proven to be God's primary way of protecting us from the dangers of this historicism about which we have spoken.** Browse the web for discussions on the rapture. In the great majority of cases, you will find it under attack and its adherents vilified. *In virtually every case*, these attacks come from historicists, folks who have embraced mixed and convoluted views of the end times.

- When a novel prophetic view of any consequence arises (and I have seen them here among our own) we can usually trace the error back to the preeminent rapture!
- The first step in defending your prophetic position is to defend the rapture. It is the watershed, the linchpin of prophecy. When one looks at a linchpin it is very small in

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<sup>3</sup> [The Popular Handbook on the Rapture: Experts Speak Out on End-Times Prophecy \(Take Me Through the Bible\): LaHaye, Tim, Ice, Thomas, Hindson, Ed: 9780736947831: Amazon.com: Books](#)

comparison to what is in front of it and what is behind it, but it is critical. The rapture is no small matter. God wants His people to know exactly where they are in history.

- Oh, and by the way, try and find a historicist who embraces a future for Israel! When the pre-tribulation rapture falls, Israel is soon disenfranchised from her prophetic role.

**B. The rapture is actually essential to the consummation!** You see, the age in which we live is unique. It is a mystery age.

Unlike the events in Revelation, our present age was not prophesied.

Our present age began with the mystery of the indwelling Christ (Col. 1:27)

*“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this **mystery** among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”* (Colossians 1:27, KJV 1900, underscore, mine)

Our present age ends with the mystery of the removal of the Church which is His body (1 Cor. 15:51).

*“Behold, I shew you a **mystery**; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”* (1 Corinthians 15:51–52, KJV 1900, underscore, mine)

You see, Christ is now working in and through His body – the church (Eph. 1:23). When our Lord moves His hand forward and grasps that scroll (Rev. 5:7), He will, personally and **in His own physical body**, set the end time events in motion and execute them directly from heaven and then on earth. He will no longer execute His plan through His body, the church. The rapture is the linchpin between the mystery age of the church and the consummation of the end time prophecies which focus on Israel.

So, you see, when you so kindly and graciously give away God’s declarations concerning the rapture you have exposed your family and friends to the whims of historicism on the one hand and, by the way, you’ve opened the door to large doses of antisemitism on the other. Now, let’s get back to the long focus.

#### **IV. WE MAY NOW LOOK BACK FROM THE FUTURE AND ASK, WHAT ABOUT OUR PRESENT PROPHETIC STATE?**

If we are not historicists, do we have any biblical precedents which would give us pause about the days in which we live? We know we are to be always watching for the rapture, but do we have a duty to weigh the present circumstances in a prophetic context? The answer is a resounding yes!

**A. As futurists, we dare not be prophetic nominalists.** I have seen this egregious mistake repeatedly; the subtle intimation that, if the rapture is the next event on the prophetic

calendar, then we need concern ourselves with no more. We may leave prophecy to speculators and theologians wearing horn-rimmed glasses. That is what we call nominalism. I see it all the time.

Turn with me to the very end of the book of Revelation and let me point out a simple statement which I am childish enough to believe is literal. You will find it in Revelation 22:16.

*“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”* (Revelation 22:16, KJV 1900, underscore, mine.)

This book of Revelation was given to the churches! Now, will it also apply to the tribulation saints? Be absolutely certain. This book was given to us, in spite of the doctrine of the pre-eminence of the rapture.

**B. As futurists, we must become prophetic activists.** And why, was so much prophecy given to us, both in the epistles and in the Apocalypse? It was given to us so that we could share a long term, wise and mature view of future history, and then, to align ourselves in our own time with what God is doing right now. Now, that is *true* activism. That is **prophetic activism instead of political activism**.

Now, hear me out. We can pepper our social media comments with Donald Trump and COVID and President Biden, and Antifa, and censorship, stolen votes, conspiracy, and revolution, and, (as long as it is done in a godly way), that is our privilege. But would you like to know what is giving us away? Amid all this heat, theorizing, pontificating, and everything else which is being said, I am seeing very few serious attempts to align all that is happening with the prophetic Word of God, and I am certainly not seeing the mind and humility of Christ which Paul just taught us all so beautifully in Philippians.

So, here, let me get your attention with a wild and crazy statement. Are you ready? Here it is, and you can quote me on this. **“As terrifying as this sounds, there are far greater issues on the table, right now, than the potential fall of our beloved nation.”** That is the least of our focal points. I restate it, **“As terrifying as it sounds, there are far greater things on the table than the fall of America!”**

**C. As futurists, we must reason back to where we are from Babylon.** Now, we can talk about the pre-tribulation rapture all we want, and as you have seen, I will be the first to defend it, but if you will look closely at the scriptures, if you look closely at the writings of the Bible’s greatest champion of the rapture, you will discover an important truth. This same Paul, this champion of the imminent rapture, was the same Paul who fortified his flock by making sure they knew exactly what the march of history was about and where they stood. It never occurred to him not to speak of history and prophecy and the mystery of iniquity moving forward in a singular march toward the end times – despite a pre-eminent rapture.

Now, here's where our prophetic focus needs to be. Babylon is breathing down our necks and our salvation is far nearer than when we believed (Rom. 13:11). One may ask, "Weren't these earlier believers also living in terrible times? Were they not under the same kind of severe persecution the saints of Christ are now experiencing in India and other Islamic countries?" And, the answer is, yes. This **BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH** has always had an insatiable thirst for the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:5). This bloodthirsty quest has been focused on letting **the blood of the prophets and saints of all that were slain upon the earth**. (Rev. 18:24). This is no small future enemy who rises out of nowhere and diminishes over the span of less than seven years. She has been with us since the days of Nimrod. She was at Babel. The earth has always been and now is wet with the freshly shed blood of her victims.

**D. As futurists, we must still ask if things are changing.** Recently, I heard an analyst discuss the current state of events. As one who gave no evidence of biblical knowledge, he was still wiser than many who do. He pointed out that the waves of history move like a pendulum, and that periods of what he called "collective insanity," are usually followed by a return to more sane and normal thinking. I agreed with him to a point because this pendulum never swings back to its starting point, it only moves partially toward the middle and finds its new starting point, moving even further to the left on its next swing. However, I believe our analyst is wrong and that this time is different.

Let me tell you what I believe personally. I believe we have reached a critical mass in the forward movement of the mystery of iniquity, a point, at the very least, from which the pendulum will no longer swing. Period.

**1. Paul (and others) told us things would change.** Our pre-tribulation rapturist Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:1-5:

*"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Timothy 4:1-5, KJV 1900, underline, mine)*

We'll deal with the fables in the next session. This turning away does not imply ignorance or even agnosticism. It suggests that these folks have evaluated the truth and have turned from it in favor of a message more satisfying to the flesh. They no longer want to be reproved or rebuked or exhorted. They choose rather to be coddled and entertained. So, we see that, in the name of Jesus and love, we are to coddle and cajole them. I think not! At the very time when folks are rejecting these things, we are to be turning up the heat.

**2. Revelation tells us how it will consummate:** Revelation seems to point to a consummation in three major arenas, what I prefer to call political Babylon, commercial Babylon, and religious Babylon. But, for the sake of making my point, let's break these out with more generic terms:

- Do we need to speak of media's open and absolute rebellion against God locally or globally? There does not remain, on this planet, a single place where freedom to report the truth exists. I first began my own media wars back in the '70's when the local TV stations in the Cedar Rapids, Iowa market refused simple gospel messages in the form of advertising. That was just a blip in contrast to what has come about in a few short decades. Friend, media hates God, it hates the gospel, it hates the saints of God, and it hates their message.
- Do we need to speak about government, nationally or globally? The heathen rage, the people imagine a vain thing, and the kings of the earth have taken counsel together against the Lord and His anointed. (See Psalm 2:1,2). Do we need to devote even one minute to The United Nations, to the European Union, to the World Health Organization, to the communist bloc? To the Islamic governments of the world? Of course, the nations have always stood against God, but pay attention to their bands. They are fast uniting against their common Enemy.
- Education? Seriously? The educators of this world have linked their arms in one grand, fortified attack against God and His truth. They have imported layer upon layer of mythology into their sciences and systematically mocked anyone who would dare challenge their mantra.
- And while we're at it, what about medicine? What about do no harm.
- Economy? Do you think, for even a microsecond, that commercial Babylon has no agenda. Her cancer is globally systemic. We are all in her grips.
- Religion?
- Entertainment? "Celebrityism?"
- Family (whatever that is)? The global attack against marriage and gender. Do you understand my point, folks? Babylon has this world in her cocoon.

In every case, we have seen further decline in the last ten years than we have seen in the last two hundred years. Now, the scales have tipped. There are no restraining forces left to hold media, government, education, economy, religion, and entertainment accountable.

And, look at me now, understand this: This has all happened over the course of one generation! Just wait until you see what tomorrow holds, should the Lord tarry!

## **V. SO, WHAT ARE WE TO DO IN LIGHT OF OUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCE?**

That, of course, is another whole message! In fact, in our next session we will be looking in the other direction, specifically, Babylon's past history and her present intrusion into evangelicalism. We will learn to distinguish more clearly between worldliness in general and

Babylon, in particular. 'Til then, let me leave you with three short, easily remembered admonitions that we can all take to heart.

**A. Understand that these are encouraging days, not discouraging days!** Understand that the scriptures which spoke of these days when the mystery of iniquity would bloom are the same scriptures which equip us to enlist and be counted. May I suggest we stop longing for the old days, and rise to the challenge of our day? Could God bring a great revival among us in these last days? Of course, He can, but, if you're playing the hermit crab game, thinking that our only hope is revival, you have missed the boat. Rise, up, O' Men of God, and put your armor on. It's not about revival, folks. It's about rising to the hour! Open doors remain all around us.

**B. Secondly, follow the instructions which we have already shared, the instructions Paul gave to Timothy. Be a prophetic activist!** Preach the Word, reprove, rebuke, with all longsuffering and doctrine. And do these things all the more as you pre-trib rapturists SEE THE DAY APPROACHING!

**C. Thirdly, and most importantly, let me give it to you directly from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Himself in Revelation 18:4:**

*“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, That ye be not partakers of her sins, And that ye receive not of her plagues.”* (Revelation 18:4, KJV 1900)

Come out of her! Stop partaking of her sins! Stop fellowshiping and serving together under the common yoke of Babylon.