

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS #4

"An Eschatology of Victory"

I. Introduction

Eschatology

The branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind.

Everybody has an 'eschatology'; it can get complicated. But I want to keep it simple with an uncomplicated question.

The Question for Christians

"Will the church be victorious or defeated before the 2nd coming of Christ?"

We all believe Christ is coming back. We all believe victory will be ours *after* He comes back. But what about *before* He comes back?
Or ask it another way: When Jesus comes back, will He find His people in a state of victory or in a state of defeat?

Our answer matters. Because what we believe about the future, (our eschatology), affects how we think and act in the present.

Winners and losers are usually products of their eschatology.
Winners wake up in the morning expecting to win. (Etc.!)

- **Vanderbilt football has only had 4 winning seasons in the last 62 years. So what do you think is "Job One" for new head coach Clark Lea?**

So what about God's 'team'; by that I mean the American Church?

Would you say we are winning or losing?

I say we're losing more than we're winning because we have a 'sacred cow' in the church that needs to be killed; the widely held belief that the church will lose and keep on losing until Jesus comes off the bench and carries us across the goal line.

The sacred cow we have to kill is the 'Eschatology of Defeatism' many hold dear

II. Defeating Defeatism

Defeatism

Cynicism; discouragement; expectation of the worst; a gloomy outlook; hopelessness; lack of confidence; pessimism

A. Defeatism is the Mood of the Modern American Church

1. **I saw this coming in the early 80's;** the vast majority of American Christians buying up books by the 'prophets of pessimism' like Hal Lindsey and the "Left Behinders"; the result? A Christian culture that sees the other side winning.

David Chilton, Paradise Restored

According to this popular brand of eschatology, victory only takes place in the last chapter in the Bible. In time, in history, on earth, the Christians lose. The world is getting worse and worse, and Antichrist is coming. The devil is running the world and getting more powerful all the time

2. They tell us we are destined for defeat, the only hope we have is Christ coming soon to save us. But this focus on our escape misses the point...

David Chilton, Paradise Restored

The eschatological issue centers on one fundamental question: Will the Gospel succeed in its mission or not? All the various defeatist schools of thought are solidly lined up together on one major point: The Gospel of Jesus Christ will fail.

David Chilton, Paradise Restored

Christianity will not be successful in its worldwide task. Christ's great commission to disciple the nations will not be carried out. Satan and the forces of Antichrist will prevail in history, overcoming the Church and virtually wiping it out—until Christ returns at the last moment, like the cavalry in Grade-B westerns, to rescue the ragged little band of survivors.

3. This is, sad to say, the prevailing picture painted by the pessimists. Like Joe Biden, we're willing to run off the battlefield with our tail between our legs!

4. If you think the war cannot be won, then losing becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy!

David Chilton, Paradise Restored

For too long, Christians have been characterized by despair, defeat, and retreat. For too long, Christians have heeded a false doctrine that teaches that we are doomed to failure, that Christians *cannot* win—the notion that, until Jesus returns, Christians will steadily lose ground to the enemy.

David Chilton, Paradise Restored

A good deal of modern Rapturism should be recognized for what it really is; a dangerous error that is teaching God’s people to expect defeat instead of victory.

5. Defeatist doctrines about the end-times are so widely believed and so closely held they’ve become ‘sacred cows’ that need to be killed and replaced with an eschatology of victory.

B. An Eschatology of Victory

1. Please check me out when I tell you that the eschatology of defeat, that the church would be a loser at the time of the Second Advent, was virtually unknown in the first 1800 years of church history.

David Chilton, Paradise Restored

The Hope of worldwide conquest for Christianity has been the traditional faith of the Church throughout the ages. This fact can be demonstrated again and again.

a. Actually, besides Irenaeus (in the 2nd century), only a handful of Bible scholars held a defeatist view of the future.

2. The idea of defeatism was a ‘new path’, invented in the 1830’s by J.N. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren, inspired by a 20-year-old girl who went into a trance and saw Christians being ‘raptured’ up into heaven. Up until then, historical Christianity upheld an eschatology of dominion for the church.

David Chilton, Paradise Restored

It's a good idea to be careful about 'new' doctrines. Everything must be checked by scripture. One thing to consider is that the doctrine of dominion is not new. Inf fact, until recently, most Christians held an eschatology of dominion. Most Christians throughout history regarded the eschatology of defeat as a doctrine of crackpots.

3. It's important to admit that those who believe in a 'secret rapture' that can happen at any moment logically have to believe that there are no scriptural prophecies or conditions that have not been fulfilled at this moment.

4. But what saith the scriptures? Is there a Bible Basis for an 'eschatology of victory'? We believe that there is!

C. A Scriptural Basis for An Eschatology of Victory

1. The first and most important verse to support an eschatology of victory is the prophetic vision given to the Psalmist David in Psalm 110 verse 1. *This is the Old Testament verse most quoted in the New Testament! (7 times!)*

Psalm 110:1

The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

2. David is foreseeing the scene in heaven where Lord (Yahweh/the Father) speaks to David's Lord (Adonai/Jesus the Son); the Father God is speaking to His resurrected Son.

3. The command is to "Sit" at the right hand of God UNTIL something happens; UNTIL the Father 'makes the enemies of the Son' become His footstool'. Every word is significant.

Gregory A. Boyd, "God At War"

No other passage from the Old Testament is quoted more by New Testament authors than Psalm 100:1. Its frequent citation should cause us to pay attention to what is being said.

a. To 'sit' means to be at rest; a King sits on a throne, ruling and reigning.

b. Next, notice He ‘sits until’, a time word indicating delay.

“Until” means ‘up to the point in time or the event mentioned. It is a function word to indicate continuance of an action or condition to a specified time.

Gregory A. Boyd, “God At War”

The death and resurrection of Christ was most fundamentally a decisive act of war initiated by God against everything that opposes him. It put Christ in a position above all demonic powers, and he shall continue to battle from this exalted position until every one of these powers has been destroyed.

4. This verse tells us that the resurrected Christ will sit at the right hand of the Father UNTIL or up to the point where God has made all the son’s enemies His ‘footstool’.

Gregory A. Boyd, “God At War”

In David’s day, it was common for a king to symbolize his conquest of another kingdom by using the defeated ruler’s neck as a footstool. In this Psalm, we have a prophesy that is proclaiming that the Messiah would rule at the “right hand” of God—this is a metaphor that symbolizes power—until he subjugated his enemies by putting his foot on their necks.

5. The ‘eschatology of defeat’ tell us Jesus can come right now even though the world is in a mess and Christ’s enemies seem to be winning. But the ‘eschatology of victory’ tells us that Jesus will not come until His enemies are a footstool for His feet.

a. Here’s something to think about: The ‘feet’ are in the Body of which Christ is the Head; this seems to symbolize a victorious church must be on the earth before Christ can come.

D. A Second Scriptural Basis for an Eschatology of Victory

1. In Acts 3, the Apostle Peter is rebuking the Jews for the crucifixion of Christ and rejecting their Messiah. He tells them the resurrected Christ, Who is now seated in the heavens will come again—but not UNTIL something happens...

Acts 3:19-21 NLT

Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah. For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Acts 3:21 KJV

'until the times of restitution of all things'

2. Notice: Jesus must remain in heaven UNTIL the TIMES (plural) of refreshment come—the TIMES OF RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS promised by the prophets.

3. Peter tell us that Christ CANNOT come until everything the prophets prophesied about the final restoration of all things is fulfilled. The defeatists tell us there is nothing left to be fulfilled; but what about these prophecies?

a. What about Isaiah 2?

Isaiah 2:2-4

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths."

Isaiah 2:3-4

For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Isaiah sees the latter days as a golden age! The end of war! The church on earth triumphant!

J.A. Alexander, Princeton University

The prophet sees the church, at some distant period, exalted and conspicuous, and the nations resorting to it for instruction in the true religion, as a consequence of which he sees war cease, and universal peace prevail.

b. What about Haggai 2:6-9?

Haggai 2:6-7

"For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord of hosts.

Haggai 2:8-9

'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts. 9 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the Lord of hosts."

None less than the great Jonathn Edwards, a man the Encyclopedia Britannica called 'the greatest scholar America ever produced', comments on these verses.

Jonathan Edwards

The visible kingdom of Satan shall be overthrown, and the Kingdom of Christ set up on the ruins of it, everywhere, throughout the habitable globe. Now shall the promise made to Abraham be fulfilled, that 'in him all nations of the earth shall be blessed'; and Christ shall become 'the desire of all nations'.

Jonathan Edwards

Now the Kingdom of Christ shall, in the most strict and literal sense, be extended to all nations and the whole earth. There are many passages of scripture that cannot be understood in any other sense.

c. What 'many passages of scripture'?

(1) The promise that began after Moses' prayer prevented God from disinheriting His people...

Numbers 14:20-21

Then the Lord said: "I have pardoned (them) according to your word; but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord —

Isaiah 11:6-7

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

Isaiah 11:8-9

The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk 2:12-14

"Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, who establishes a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the peoples labor to feed the fire, and nations weary themselves in vain? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

The prophets have prophesied victory for God's people and defeat for His enemies! But we've had it the other way round! They will not win!!!

John Angell James, The Church in Earnest, 1850

We have no apprehension that such a ground of triumph will ever be given to the enemies of faith. A brighter era is destined to arrive; a golden age is to dawn upon us, when the predictions of the prophets and the descriptions of the apostles, are all to be fulfilled, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

The great theologian R.L. Dabney points out things that have not happened but that must happen before the return of Christ...

R.L. Dabney, Syllabus of Systematic Theology

Before the Second Advent, the following events must have occurred:

**The development and secular overthrow of Antichrist.
(2 Thessalonians 2:3-9; Daniel 7:24-26; Revelation 17-18)**
**The proclamation of the Gospel to all nations, and the general triumph of
Christianity over all false religions in all nations
(Psalm 72:8-11; Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:14; Matthew 28:19-20; Romans
11:12,15,25; Mark 12:10; Matthew 24:14)**

R.L. Dabney, Syllabus of Systematic Theology

**Before the Second Advent, the following events must have occurred:
The general and national return of the Jews to the Christian church.
(Romans 11:25-26)**

E. So What Do I Expect to See?

1. I expect to see the literal fulfilment of psalm 110:1 before the coming of the Lord!

Psalm 110:1

**The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your
footstool."**

a. This is what our forefathers saw!

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

**When Christ's enemies shall be under his foot, then there shall be a right order
in things; then it shall indeed appear that God is a God of order, and therefore
the day wherein that shall be done, is called "the times of the restitution of all
things".**

Patrick Fairbairn, "Prophecy" (1805-1874)

**Christ shall reign until His enemies have become His footstool and shall cause
the knowledge of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The
word of prophecy can never reach its full accomplishment till this result is
obtained.**

2. But I hear some saying: "I have a problem believing that what you're
teaching is possible, Pastor Ray. It seems to me the world and everything else is

getting worse and worse! I'm very discouraged. I'm wondering why God isn't answering our prayers for our country."

3. That's honest! OK. We're not winning right now. The church is underperforming-but the game ain't over!

St. Louis Cardinals

Two weeks ago, the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team was given a 3% chance to make the playoffs. They suffered many setbacks and injuries and had underperformed for the first 140 games of the season.

Then they went on a streak. They have now won 14 in a row, something last done in 1935. They now have a 95% chance of making the playoffs.

What was the key to the turnaround? They never stopped believing they could win!

If this can happen in sports, how much can it happen in the real world? Especially since the church is God's team and Christ is seated in the heavens?

Dr. J.H. Thornwell

American Presbyterian Pastor, 1812-1862

If the Church could be aroused to a deeper sense of the glory that awaits her, she would enter with a warmer spirit into the struggles that are before her. She would even now arise from the dust, and like the eagle, plume her pinions for loftier flights than she has yet taken.

Dr. J.H. Thornwell

What she needs is faith in her sublime calling, in her Divine resources, and in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that dwells in her-faith in the truth, faith in Jesus, faith in God. With such a faith there would be no need to speculate about the future, that would speedily reveal itself.

III. Close

A. The Key Question

1. The question for Christians is simple: Do you believe the church will be in victory or in defeat *before* the 2nd coming of Christ?

2. The prevailing view is pessimistic. Things will get worse and worse. After all, just watch the news! It's God will to get us out of this world soon! Really?

a. Then why did He pray this to the Father just before He went to the cross?

John 17:15-19

I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

(If God wanted us gone why didn't He take us right away?)

Pastor David Guzik

Jesus didn't pray that we would be taken out of the battle, but that we would be strengthened and protected in the battle.

3. Some say there's nothing left to do; they're ready for the rapture; but if He can't come back until all His enemies are under His feet, it looks like there's plenty to do!

Dr. J.H. Thornwell

It is our unfaithfulness; our negligence and unbelief that hold back the Chariot of the Redeemer. The Bridegroom cannot come until the Bride makes herself ready. Let the Church be in earnest about greater holiness in her own members, and in faith and love undertake the conquest of the world, and she will soon settle the question whether her resources are competent to change the face of the earth.

4. We need to kill the sacred cow of defeatism and a 'rescue rapture'!

5. We need to believe we can win-we will win! And I'll close with a quote from **Pastor Sammy Rodriguez** that sums up the whole situation...

The church is waiting for Jesus to come down. Jesus is waiting for the Church to stand up.

Closing Prayer

Supplemental Comments

David Chilton, 'Paradise Restored'

A great obstacle has been an 'eschatology of defeat'. An eschatology is our 'doctrine of last things', our expectation of the future. And there is no question about the recent eschatology of many Christians: We have looked forward to failure. The world is regarded as a sinking ship.

David Chilton, 'Paradise Restored'

According to some popular brands of eschatology, victory only takes place in the last chapter in the Bible. In time, in history, on earth, the Christians lose. The world is getting worse and worse and Antichrist is coming. The devil is running the world and getting more powerful all the time.

David Chilton, 'Paradise Restored'

They say your work for God in this world will have no lasting effect, except to save a few individuals from hell. But you better do it quickly, before the Tribulation hits, so that you can escape in time. Ironically, the message of dispensationalism is not 'Christ is coming' but 'the Antichrist is coming'.

David Chilton, 'Paradise Restored'

But the Bible gives us an eschatology of dominion and victory. It is a solid, confident, Bible-based assurance that before the second coming of Christ, the Gospel will be victorious throughout the whole world.