

The Bible and the Future, December 4, 2016

Class #1 Future Hope Within Boundaries of God's Word

Introductory comments on class schedule and procedures; books you may be interested in...

Meaning of the theological word "**Eschatology**"?

21st century sees keen interest in the future, set against widespread climate of **cultural despair**

The Bible is not a crystal ball. Future events seen in Scripture are **not pure speculation, but are divinely revealed** by human spokesmen authorized by God.

Popular human mentality toward Christ's return tends to seek the **spectacular...** Early 20th century **dominance of the Premillennial Dispensational views** of fundamentalism, such as Hal Lindsay's *Late, Great Planet Earth* in the 1960s. Or, the *Left Behind* novels of the 1990s. Many conservative believers think this is the only possible view of things --- in fact it is a relatively recent viewpoint begun in the mid-19th century by J.N. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren. Very early church fathers and the leaders of the Reformation did NOT hold to this Pre-mill and Dispensational viewpoint with its 'secret rapture' and multiple stages for Christ's return.

There has always been a popular yearning to find spokesmen who can provide a key to unlock the strange and mysterious texts with authority, like the book of Revelation. People want to **count themselves as among those "in the know,"** while others remain ignorant. Tendency is to make 'prophecy' into a hobby-horse, giving it disproportionate pulpit attention...

People want a 'system', into which they can plug current events! Staying within the **boundaries of the Bible** itself, which does not lay everything out in a neat 'system' is more difficult. Even broad conclusions we legitimately draw from Scripture still have unresolved details that will remain mysterious to us. Do not bend Bible texts to fit into your system!

"No man knows the Day or the hour!" God really means business about this...

We must see **Christ as "Lord of History."** Jesus Christ is God's key to all events that are yet to come. Our hope must be focused on HIM, not an artificial system.

Consider how the **Old Testament “prepared the way” for Christ** to come to earth the first time, in **themes like these**:

- 1) Predictions of a Coming Savior
- 2) A Future Kingdom
- 3) The New Covenant
- 4) Gathering of Restored Israel
- 5) The outpouring of the Holy Spirit
- 6) The Day of the Lord
- 7) New heavens and New Earth

Remember that the Bible follows pattern of **progressive revelation**. In OT, many concepts and promises were still rather general and indistinct. Things become more clear as Bible revelation moves forward through the NT. Fact is, we usually understand fulfilled prophecy best only when viewed ***after the fact, in hindsight— rarely before the fact!***

Are we living in **“the Last Days”**?

As Christians we live between the times of great events. What does it mean for Christian hope to say, **“Already, but not yet”**?