

Eschatology ABF Series

Overview / Tentative Schedule

9/1	<i>[Carry-over from July-August study]</i>
9/8	<u>Intro-Terms/Systems/Cautions/Questions to be answered</u>
9/15	<u>Daniel's Visions</u>
9/22	<u>Daniel's 70th Week</u>
9/29	<u>What/When is the Rapture?</u>
10/6	Tribulation Period
10/13	Tribulation Period
10/20	Anti-Christ
10/27	Second Coming
11/3	Millennium
11/10	Judgment - Sheep/Goat
11/17	Judgment - Judgment Seat of Christ
11/24	Judgment - White Throne
12/1	Eternity
12/8	Final Body
12/15	Wrap-up/Q&A

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Introduction

September 8th

Introduction

Opening Comments

We all want to know how the world we know ends. People, from the very first man and woman, and down through the ages have asked questions like:

What happens after I die?

Is there a Heaven, and if so, what will it be like?

Is there a Hell, and if so, what will it be like?

What happens to my loved ones when they die?

Scientists, philosophers & theologians have answered those questions very differently for over 6,000 years now.

According to the latest “science”, in about 5 billion years our sun will become a red giant engulfing our planet in the process. So, that’s it for the human race, unless we can move to one of the various exoplanets that have been discovered.

But, is that how it is really going to end. I doubt that anyone in this room believes that nonsense.

So, how do we answer those questions? Where are the definitive answers, not just educated guesses?

Premises

1. I believe, without apology, that the Bible contains the answers to each of those questions.
2. I will attempt, to the best of my ability, to accurately interpret the Bible as we examine multiple topics related to the end times, and the end of this life for people and the beginning of eternity.
3. I recognize that among people who take the Bible seriously, who believe it is God’s Word, completely inspired in all parts, there are differences of opinion on many of the major concepts when it comes to understanding the end times. I do not mean to call their commitment to the Bible or Christ into question, just their interpretation of the various passages we will examine. Because sincere people believe differently, I want to give you a brief overview (from time to time) what the alternate interpretations are for certain concepts and passages.

Approach

1. This is not a seminary course, but neither is it your casual Bible study. These are complicated topics, so we are going pretty deep in comparing Scripture with Scripture in our attempt to arrive at the truth.

2. We will be examining these end-times concepts as separate, but interwoven, concepts. We will not be working our way chapter by chapter and verse by verse through the Book of the Revelation.
3. I will be examining this whole topic from the same perspective I use for understanding all other Scripture, which is a literal, historical, grammatical approach. What are the words used, what did the original author intend and what does the grammar used teach us about the passage?

Tricky Part – Both Daniel & John use a lot of symbolism in their writings. It is perfectly acceptable to say that we are using a literal approach and yet understanding symbols as symbols (a truth not understood by Bill Nye in the famous debate between him and Ken Ham). The best approach is to let Scripture interpret the symbols for us whenever possible.

Example: Jesus is referred to as the “Lamb of God”, but does a literal interpretation force us to see Him as an animal? No, within literal interpretation, we know that the author is using a symbol and we know what truth the symbol is meant to teach. *Ask them what the symbol of a lamb means.*

Four Views on the Book of the Revelation

1. **Preterist** (past) – Understands the events of Revelation in large part to have been fulfilled in the first centuries of the Christian era, either at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD or at both falls of Jerusalem in the first century and of Rome in the 5th century. The book was written to comfort Christians who suffered persecution from both the imperial cult and Judaism. This is **NOT** the view I take.
2. **Historicist** – Views the events of Revelation as unfolding in the course of history. This perspective was especially compatible with the thinking of the Protestant Reformers, who equated the papal system of their day with the Antichrist. This was hugely popular, but has largely passed off the scene.
3. **Futurist** – Argues that the events of Revelation are largely unfulfilled, holding that chapters 4-22 await the end times for their realization. This is what I will be presenting as the correct interpretation.
4. **Idealist** – Is reticent to pinpoint the symbolism of Revelation historically. For this school of thought, Revelation sets forth timeless truths concerning the battle between good and evil that continues throughout the church age. This remains very popular with those who just want “life lessons” from the book. Again, this is **NOT** the view I take. I believe that the Book of the Revelation is spelling out events that will actually take place.

Systems

Concept – Students of the Bible, especially “western” thinkers, like to fit verses into larger systems. The idea is that verses that are clear provide the foundation for building a system that then helps us understand more confusing verses.

Example: I Peter 3:21a *“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you ...”*

Explain how our understanding of other passages helps us to understand this passage.

Systematic Theology

Bibliology – study of/theology of the Bible

Theology Proper – study of/theology of God

Christology – study of/theology of Christ

Pneumatology – study of/theology of the Holy Spirit

Anthropology – study of/theology of mankind/humanity

Harmartiology – study of/theology of sin

Soteriology – study of/theology of salvation

Ecclesiology – study of/theology of the church

Angelology – study of/theology of angelic beings

Demonology – study of/theology of demons

Eschatology – study of/theology of end times

Two Major Theological Systems

1. Covenant Theology

- a. Covenant theology centers on one overall covenant known as the covenant of grace.
- b. Covenant theology does not see each covenant as separate and distinct. Instead, each covenant builds on the previous ones, including aspects of the previous ones, including aspects of the previous covenants and culminating in the new covenant.
- c. Result - God has one people, represented by the saints in the OT and the saints of the NT era. The church has replaced the Jews as God's people.

2. Dispensational Theology

- a. Dispensational theology sees God superintending the outworking of His will in various periods or stages of different economies, called dispensations.
- b. Their number often includes seven: innocence (pre-fall), conscience (post-fall to flood), human government (flood to Abraham), promise (Abraham to Moses), law (Moses to Christ), grace (church age), and kingdom (Millennium & beyond).
- c. Result - God has two major peoples (Israel and the church). The Jews are still God's people and the promises given to Abraham and the Jews will **not** be fulfilled in the Church.

Honest Admission – I think that both of the two major systems I will explain in a few minutes have a problem forcing certain verses to fit into their system, when the apparent meaning doesn't necessarily support it.

Example: Daniel's 70 (69+1) weeks. We see them as representing weeks of years. 69 weeks equaling 483 years, then a pause for an indeterminate amount of time, then a final 7 years. We'll look at this whole issue in a later lesson. I will give other examples as we go along.

Terms

Millennium – literal 1,000 year visible reign of Christ on the earth

Rapture – “catching up” of God’s people in the air to meet Him

Imminence – rapture (Second Coming) could happen any time, there are no required prophecies that need fulfilled first

Key Events

Rapture

1. Pre-Trib - The rapture of the church occurs just prior to the seven-year tribulation, where Christ returns for his saints to meet them in the air.
2. Post-Trib - The rapture of the church (the body of true believers) happens after a period of great tribulation, with the church being caught up to meet Christ in the air and will accompany him to earth to share in his (literal or figurative) thousand year rule.
3. Mid-Trib/Pre-Wrath - The rapture of the church occurs in the midst of the seven-year period. Mid-tribulation view holds that the rapture occurs halfway through; Pre-wrath holds that the rapture occurs some time in the midst of the tribulation in the latter 3½ years, but before God’s wrath is poured out upon the nations.

Second Coming

1. Pre-Millennialism – Christ’s Second coming will kick off a literal one thousand-year period
2. Post-Millennialism – Christ’s Second coming is seen as occurring after the one-thousand years, which many in this school of thought believe is ushered in by the church
3. Amillennialism - Non-literal “thousand years” or long age between Christ’s first and second comings

Cautions

1. Going farther than the text allows by reading 21st century nations/lands/creatures/devices of war into a document written in the sixth century BC (Daniel) or a first century AD document (Revelation).
Examples: Revelation 14:3 (144,000 Jehovah Witnesses); Revelation 9 locusts (Abrams tanks using chemical warfare)
2. Not going far enough – spiritualizing everything.
Examples: 3½ years, 1260, 1290 and 1,335 days; 1,000 years just mean long periods of time, not exact numbers

Questions You Want Answered?

I reserve the right to post-pone answering a question if I know it will be covered in full later on, because some answers cannot be given in a sentence or two without a lot of prior groundwork being laid.