

Introduction

Thomas Edison – famous inventor – knew what it was to persevere – some experiments would fail 1,000's of times before he came up with the finished working product.

Thomas Edison said – Genius is 2% inspiration and 98% perspiration. Or to put it another way, success necessitates a lot of hard work!

Over the past six weeks we have looked at the study of the end times and I am sure you can agree with me that there is a lot to this subject; pages upon pages of notes have been written.

For each of you who have listened to every message faithfully I commend you for your perseverance.

However, I wonder if you are going to continue to persevere until you discern what the truth is regarding the Word of the LORD and the end times?

Tonight I want to bring a concluding message to the series and really speak a final message on...

The Study of End Times

...bringing it all together.

Notice with me first of all,

1) The One Teaching of Scripture on the Study of the End Times

I chose this title because it is important: there is only one teaching of Scripture on the subject of the End Times. This means there is only one correct view of the End Times.

We have spent six weeks going through this teaching of Scripture – looking at Scripture from the very beginning in Genesis to the very end in Revelation. Note with me...

A) *God Gave Promises to Abraham*

- The Promise of a Seed which would become a great nation
- The Promise of a Land which he would inherit for ever

B) *God Gave Promises to David*

The Promise of a King:

- A King who is both God and man
- A King who would reign over the whole world – Jews and Gentiles, and
- A King whose reign would be eternal and righteous

C) *God gave a Message to the Prophets*

A Message that there would come the Day of the LORD:

- A Day when God will judge sinners with great wrath and without hope; and
- A Day when God is exalted as the only true and living God.

D) *God gave a Message in the Gospels – in particular the Olivet Discourse*

A prominent aspect of this message is found in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 when God's Son, Jesus Christ answers His disciples when they ask Him to Tell them when the Temple would be destroyed and He would come again.

And finally,

E) *God Gave a Message in Revelation*

A message which John was to pass on to the seven churches regarding "*things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter*".

For six weeks we looked at each of these teachings in a degree of detail and while so many more passages and subjects could be covered regarding the study of the End Times, yet these six passages give us a good summary of the one teaching of Scripture.

Now while there is only one teaching of Scripture I want us now to notice...

2) **The Four Interpretations of Men on the Study of the End Times**

There are four different ways in which people will generally interpret single Scriptures teaching on the End Times.

As you might expect, every one of these interpretations will have slight variations within them, but what I will explain to you is what I understand the common explanation of each view to be.

It is my aim to explain one view at a time:

- Explaining how this one view commences at Abraham and continues through to Revelation; and then
- Explaining the timeline this view gives of the End Time along with the title it is commonly known by.

Observe with me first of all:

A) **Interpretation One**

According to this interpretation, when **God gave promises to Abraham** of a Seed which would become a great nation and a Land He would inherit for ever, this interpretation believes...

- This Seed is Isaac and the great nation is the Jewish people.
- The Land is the temporal land of Canaan from the great river Euphrates to the river of Egypt.

This view believes the land of Canaan has never been fully possessed by the Jewish people and therefore Canaan must be fully possessed in the future by the Jewish people.

This naturally leads on to **God's promise of David**:

When God promised David he will have a Son who will reign as king, this view believes this King will fulfil the original promises to Abraham. So the King, Jesus Christ will reign over ...

- The Jewish people primarily; and
- In the physical land of Canaan – from the great river Euphrates to the river of Egypt.

In order for this to happen, God must prepare the Jewish people for the coming of Christ. This God will do by working in their hearts just before Christ returns and drawing them to in salvation.

This means that **the Olivet Discourse** (in passages such as Matthew 24) is primarily about God sending a period of great tribulation and persecution which will lead many of the Jews to turn to the LORD in salvation – at the end of which Christ will return and reign over these saved Jews in Jerusalem.

Because the reign of Christ is primarily for the Jews...

- God will remove the church from the earth in a secret rapture and place them in a special city which hovers over the earth – known as the New Jerusalem; and
- God will judge all the wicked.

This first view interprets **the book of Revelation** solely from the futurist perspective resulting in...

- The antichrist being one man who will arise in the future; and
- Christ to come before His reign

This is the follow-through teaching of the first interpretation.

To help you understand it, let me now explain what this interpretation would look like in real time by giving a timeline:

- Before the coming of Christ there will be signs to look out for which will indicate the end of time is near. These signs are the rise of false prophets, apostasy and the spread of the Gospel to every tribe and tongue.
- After these signs and seven years before Christ's second coming, a man (the antichrist) will arise and make a treaty with the Jewish people.
- The church (all who believe in Christ, Jew and Gentile) is taken from the earth to live in the New Jerusalem which hovers over the earth.
- The antichrist will break his treaty with the Jewish people and will bring great persecution upon the Jewish people for 3.5 years through which many Jews will turn to the LORD in salvation. Such persecution will include the introduction of the Mark of the Beast.

- Christ will return immediately after the 3.5 years of tribulation making His coming predictable to within a few days.
- Christ will commence the Day of the LORD:
 - o Christ will judge ALL the wicked who believe not in Him and have the Mark of the Beast – whether they be Jew or Gentile.
 - o Christ commences His kingdom reign from those converted during tribulation (mainly Jews and few Gentiles) fulfilling God’s promise to Abraham by reigning from Jerusalem over a primarily Jewish nation.
 - o Satan is bound at this stage – unable to stop people believing in Christ.
 - o People will live in normal bodies during these 1,000 years and will have children: some of them will believe in Christ and some will not.
 - o At the end of these 1,000 years Satan will be loosed by Christ to gather all the unbelievers together in a final battle against Christ.
 - o Christ however will win and Christ will judge Satan along with all the wicked who joined with him in this final battle to eternal punishment.
 - o Christ will set up the new heaven and earth for those who believed in Him, being joined by those who were in the city above the earth (the New Jerusalem) and together – Jews and Gentiles from all ages – will live with Christ for eternity.

This view is known as **Dispensational Premillennialism**.

- This view is called **Premillennial** because it believes Christ will return **BEFORE** the millennium – hence Pre-millennialism
- This view is called **Dispensational** because it believes God has different dispensations (periods) in which He works and in general He does not mix Jew and Gentile together.
 - o In the OT God worked primarily among the Jewish people.
 - o At the first coming of Christ God offered the kingdom to the Jews. If they received it eternity would have commenced then and the Gentile nations would have been eternally destroyed. The Jews however rejected Christ, so God decided He would really stop working among the Jewish people and start working among the Gentiles.
 - o When God decides it is time to stop working greatly with the Gentiles, Christ will return and recommence working among the Jews in the kingdom and fulfil His original promise to Abraham.

It is worth noting that the Free Presbyterian Church along with all Reformed churches do not believe the Scriptures teach such dispensations and divisions among God’s people and therefore rejects this view of the End Times altogether.

Instead, Reformed Theology teaches that God’s plan to work among the Gentiles was not an after-thought, but a promise from the beginning (Genesis 12:3) and that today God is working among both Jews and Gentiles for their salvation.

B) Interpretation Two

This view has many similarities to the first view but with some major key differences.

According to this second view, when God promised **Abraham** a Seed and a Land,

- The land is the land of Canaan from the great river Euphrates to the river of Egypt
- The seed is Christ and the great nation of people are all those who are saved in Christ – with a special emphasis on the Jewish people who are saved in Christ.

Like the first view, this second view does not believe the temporal land of Canaan has been possessed; and so in the future...

- God will give the temporal land of Canaan to all who are saved in Christ (Jew and Gentile).
- BUT, God will work among the Jewish people at the end of time in a particularly great way because God wants many Jews to have the temporal land promised to Abraham.

This means that when God promised **David** a Son who will reign...

- This reign is over the physical land of Canaan from the great river Euphrates to the river of Egypt;
- AND it is over all who believe in Christ – Jew and Gentile.

Knowing that many of the Jewish people have turned from the LORD since His first coming, this view believes God must prepare the Jewish people for this reign at Christ's second coming by working in their hearts just before Christ returns.

The Olivet Discourse therefore is primarily about God sending a period of great tribulation and persecution which will lead many of the Jews to turn to the LORD in salvation – at the end of which Christ will return and reign over these saved Jews in Jerusalem.

Because the reign of Christ is for all who are saved – Jews and Gentiles – there is no need to remove the church from the earth.

The **book of Revelation** is interpreted by many from the futurist perspective and by some from an historicist perspective. Most commonly, this view holds...

- The antichrist is one man who will arise in the future; and
- Christ will come before His reign.
- The Day of the LORD is therefore a long period of time.

The timeline of this second view is as follows:

- Before Christ's coming there will be signs to look out for which will indicate the end of time is near. These signs are the rise of false prophets, apostasy and the spread of the Gospel to every tribe and tongue.
- After these signs and seven years before Christ's second coming a man (the antichrist) will arise and make a treaty with the Jewish people.
- The antichrist will break his treaty and bring great persecution upon national Jewish people AND the church for 3.5 years through which many national Jews will turn to the LORD in salvation. Such persecution will include the introduction of the Mark of the Beast.
- Christ will return immediately after the 3.5 years of tribulation making His coming predictable to within a few days.
- Christ will commence the Day of the LORD:
 - o Christ will return with all the saved ones in heaven and those who are saved on this earth will rise to meet Him in the air, welcoming Him to the earth.
 - Christ will vindicate and glorify all those who believe in Him (OT and NT) – giving them eternal and perfect bodies which will never die.
 - o Christ will judge some of the wicked: namely, those who have received the Mark of the Beast.
 - o Christ will then commence His reign in Jerusalem, reigning over Canaan from the great river Euphrates to the river of Egypt. Christ will reign over the saved Jews, the saved Gentiles and all the wicked who did not receive the Mark of the Beast. Christ will do this to fulfil God's promise to Abraham with particular reference to reigning from Jerusalem over Jewish saved people.
 - o Christ will bind Satan from deceiving people and many of the ungodly will turn to the LORD for salvation during this time.
 - o At the end of these 1,000 years Satan will be loosed by Christ to gather all the unbelievers together in a final battle against Christ.
 - o Christ will win and Christ will judge Satan along with all the wicked who joined with him in this final battle to eternal punishment.
 - o Christ will set up the new heaven and earth for those who have believed in Him and Christ will dwell with them for eternity in the New Jerusalem – a literal city which is 1,500 miles long, wide and high: reaching 1430 miles into space!

This view is known as **Historic Premillennialism**.

- It is called **Premillennialism** because it believes Christ will return before His 1,000 year reign
- It is called **Historic** because there are some early church fathers who taught this view, such as Papias (1stC), Justin Martyr (2ndC) and Irenaeus (2ndC).

C) Views Three and Four

The final two views are quite different from the first two; however when taken together they are very similar. It is therefore easier to mention the similarities first and then mention the one difference between them at the very end.

When God promised to **Abraham** a Seed and a Land,

- The Land is ultimately fulfilled in the new heaven and earth with the temporal land of Canaan being a picture pointing forward to it.
- The Seed is Christ and the great nation are those who are saved in Him. While God chose to work initially through the Jewish people to save them and spread His Gospel, God is equally saving Jew and Gentile today.

When God promised **David** a Son who would reign...

- This reign commenced at the first coming of Christ in the hearts of men and will see its climax when Christ returns, His people are glorified and He reigns in their hearts perfectly in the new heaven and earth.

Matthew 24 is primarily about the destruction of Jerusalem and gives no signs that help people to determine and predict the timing of Christ's second coming.

The **Book of Revelation** is interpreted from a preterist, idealist or historicist perspective.

This results in the following timeline:

- Christ came the first time to bind Satan and set up His Kingdom – a Kingdom in which He would reign in the hearts of people throughout the whole world and not just primarily among the Jewish people like the OT.
- Christ is building His church now and once it is completed with every person saved (Jew and Gentile), Christ will return suddenly and at a time unable to be predicted by men.
- Christ will return with all the saved ones in heaven and those who are saved on this earth will rise to meet Christ in the air, welcoming Him to the earth.
- Christ will judge all the wicked and the first heaven and earth will flee away.
- Christ will glorify all His saved people and set up the new heaven and earth – dwelling with them for all eternity.

These are the similarities between views three and four.

The only major disagreement between them is as follows:

- ❖ View Three believes the world will get better before the return of Christ: Christ's reign and power being seen in the great majority of the world being saved before His coming. (Some within this view believe this will include a literal 1,000 years of golden age prosperity leading up to the second coming of Christ while others see the 1,000 years as symbolic.)
- ❖ View Four believes the world get worse before the return of Christ: Christ's reign and power being seen in the saved being preserved and upheld in the midst of great tribulation and persecution before His coming.

View Three is called **Postmillennialism** because it believes Christ will return AFTER the 1,000 years – POST-millennialism. (The term being originally developed for those who held to a literal 1,000 year golden age period.)

View Four is called **Amillennialism** because while it does believe in a real 1,000 year reign of Christ it believes the 1,000 years are symbolic of a long period of time and not indicative 1,000 literal years. Hence A-millennialism (the prefix "a" – often meaning "no").

3) Discerning the Truth in the Study of the End Times

As I mentioned at the very beginning, there is only one teaching of Scripture regarding the End Times, not four. As a result, not every view is correct!

How then can you discern which view is correct?

- After all, if you read one person's view it seems so very convincing and then if you read another person's view it can seem very convincing as well.
- Also, you may likely know good and godly men throughout history and in the present who hold to different views.
 - Is it just a matter of believing the last book you read?
- Is it just a matter of going with the preacher/teacher you like the most and believe to be the most educated or godly?

No, not at all!

- The LORD tells us emphatically in Isaiah 8:20, *“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”*

Men and women, you and I have ONE sole authority for what we believe and how we act – that is the Word of God!

- As the apostle John tells us, there is false teaching in this world and we are therefore to test everything a minister or friend teaches us to see if it is in agreement to the Gospel of Jesus Christ revealed in the Scriptures.

How then can you discern which view is correct? I have thought long and hard about this and I believe the answer is as follows:

- Understand the key characteristics of each view
- Submit yourself to the LORD – being willing for Him to show you His truth, whether it is the view you hoped for or not; and
- Pray for the LORD to unveil the truth to you bit by bit through your reading of God’s Word.

This is how I came to the view I currently hold to. It was not the view I was brought up with but as I asked the LORD to show me His will, it is the view I find to be consistent with the Gospel which I read in Scripture day by day.

I could not have discerned which view is correct from the Scripture if I did not know what the key characteristics of each interpretation were; but in knowing them, as I read the Scriptures day by day, week by week and month by month and year by year I am able to be led to one particular view as being in harmony with the entirety of Scripture.

With that said, I want to neatly summarise for you the major characteristics of each view so you can see what key questions you must look for the Scriptures to answer in your daily readings.

Question	Postmillennialism	Amillennialism	Historic Premillennialism	Dispensational Premillennialism
Who is the Seed and Nation promised to Abraham that we are to look for?	Christ and all who are saved in Christ	Christ and all who are saved in Christ	Christ and all who are saved primarily; but the Jewish people have special promises	The Jewish people alone
Where are we to look for Christ to reign?	Primarily in the hearts of Christ's people now and then eternally with them the physical land of New Heaven and Earth	Primarily in the hearts of Christ's people now and then eternally with them the physical land of New Heaven and Earth	Primarily over the physical land of Canaan but also the hearts of His people now	The physical land of Canaan after His second coming
Are there signs to help us predict the time Christ will return?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Will God's people go through the Tribulation?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Is there hope for the wicked when Christ returns?	No. Christ will judge all the wicked at His return.	No. Christ will judge all the wicked at His return.	Yes. As long as they don't have the Mark of the Beast they will live under Christ's Kingdom	No. Christ will judge all the wicked who are living at that time at His return.
When are Christ's people resurrected?	Once at Christ's second coming	Once at Christ's second coming	Twice - before and after the 1,000 years	Twice - before and after the 1,000 years
Is the Gospel going to be effective in saving every one of Christ's chosen people before Christ's return?	Yes	Yes	No	No
Will the world get better before Christ's return?	Yes	No	No	No
Is God working among the Jewish people today?	Yes - just like the Gentiles	Yes - just like the Gentiles	Yes - just like the Gentiles	Yes - but in a very limited way. The focus is on the Gentiles.
Do we need to look out for a future antichrist?	No	No	Yes	Yes

How is Revelation interpreted?	Primarily Preterist. Some Historicist and Idealist.	Primarily Idealist. Some Historicist and Preterist	Primarily Futurist. Some Historicist	Futurist
What is the New Jerusalem?	God's saved people	God's saved people	A literal city	A literal city

4) **The Importance of the End Times**

Some people tonight may be wondering if it is even important to discern what is correct regarding the End Times.

- After all, it seems like a lot of hard work!
- Plus, you may say, "I have gotten on fine in my Christian walk up until now without knowing!"

Let me tell you that discerning the truth of the end times is important! It is not essential to your salvation, but is an important aspect of your salvation!

A) The Study of the End Times is important because God tells us much about it!

- In the OT the second coming of Christ is foretold more than His first coming!
- In the NT the second coming of Christ is mentioned 300 times – which is even more frequently than His death!
- Furthermore, every single writer in the NT mentions the second coming of Christ! Paul, Peter, John, James, Matthew, Mark and Luke!

If God tells you something once it is important! If He tells you something 300 times in the NT alone – it is pretty important!

Perhaps you wonder why it is so important? Why mention the end times more than Christ's death – after all it was the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross that purchased our salvation! Yes, but Christ only shed His blood on the cross so you and I could experience the reality of the end times and live with Him forevermore!

The end times are the climax and culmination of all Christ died for! To neglect it is to neglect much of the reason why Christ died!

The study of the End Times are important!

B) The Study of the End Times is important because God commands us to watch for His return!

In Mark 13:32-37 Jesus Christ speaks of His second coming and He says in v33, "Take ye heed, watch and pray". The context is of a servant in a household who awaits his Master's return :

- The servant is to believe his Master will return
- The servant is to think about his Master's return; and
- The servant is to work hard and diligently in light of the Master's return!

Men and women today, if you do not study the end-times then you cannot fulfil this command of Christ!

- How can you believe the Scriptures unless you know what they say about the Lord's return?
- How can you think upon the LORD's return unless you know what the Scriptures say?
- How can you faithfully and diligently work and pray in light of the LORD's return unless you know what Scripture says regarding it?

C) The Study of the End Times is important for Truth in a world of nonsense

There is so much nonsense out there regarding the second coming of Christ: teaching that is so contrary to the teaching of Scripture and misleading sincere people into dangerous and dodgy territory.

Unless you know what Scripture actually teaches you can get caught up in such nonsense!

D) The Study of the End Times is important for Hope in a world of darkness

This world is littered with sickness and pain as well as sin and wickedness. It is a world full of...

- It is a world full of lying, lust and perversion
- All around are those who hate God and blaspheme His name

All of this makes the child of God to groan like the creation for all this to end and eternity to begin where there will be no more pain, no more sickness, no more sin – for the former things are all passed away and righteousness alone will dwell!

This is engrained in us for we were designed and made by God to live in the paradise of the Garden of Eden- yet we live in a fallen and cursed world.

Studying, discerning and contemplating the subject of the End Times brings hope in a world of darkness: knowing that one day Christ will return and make all things right in the world and even in our hearts!

- The LORD promises in Numbers 14:21, "as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD".

Let me ask you, are you longing for that day?

Can you sing like the hymn writer...

What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see;
And I look upon His face, The One who saved me by His grace;
When He takes me by the hand, And leads me through the Promised Land,
What a day, glorious day that will be.

There are so many people today who live in spiritual despair. But what a hope we have!

- Christ will be victorious!
- Christ will bless the Gospel and save His people!
- Christ will make all things well!
- We shall see Him face to face
- We will be made like Him – perfectly pure; and
- We will forever be with the LORD. Him dwelling with us and we dwelling with Him!

Finally,

E) *The Study of the End Times is important for Love in a world of Bitterness*

a) *Studying the End Times ought to create a love for God's people*

As you read God's Word and begin to discern what it says regarding the end times you will disagree with other brethren regarding some aspects of it:

- You may disagree over how much hope one can have in the Gospel's effectiveness before Christ's return
- You may disagree over how much time ought to be spent looking for a final antichrist
- You may disagree over the hope the wicked do or do not have when Christ returns;

BUT, you will realise that no matter what end time view a person holds to – as we have seen – every view has reasons based on Scripture as to why they believe what they believe. Every view is seeking to uphold Scripture!

Furthermore, you will be prevented from calling someone a heretic and idolater: doubting their very salvation, for you will realise that in the midst of debate there are key beliefs which ALL four views hold to – and every believer accepts these beliefs. Namely,

- Jesus Christ will return to earth in bodily form at some point in the future;
- God will raise all humanity at some point in the future; and
- Jesus Christ will judge all humanity.

Let me ask you...

- Do you love those brethren who differ from you on the end times, or...
 - o Do you hate them?
 - o Do you refuse to pray for them?
 - o Do you ridicule them?
 - o Do you want them to disappear from this scene of time?

Men and women...

- In 1 John 5 we are told, those who love Christ also love what Christ loves.
- Does Christ love His people?! Yes He does! So you ought to love Christ's people and if you refuse to love them and pray for them because of their end time view being different from yours then you are sinning against Christ!

Studying the End Times ought to create a love for God's people – understanding where they come from and why they believe what they believe

b) Studying the End Times ought to create a love for the lost

For it is when you remember that there is coming a day of judgment for the wicked that you will contemplate the brevity of the hour and the need for them to come to know Christ before it is too late!

Finally, and most importantly,

c) Studying the End Times ought to create a love for the LORD

The study of the end-times should help us get a clearer view of Christ –

- It will help us see more clearly His love to us in the promises He has given to us
- It will help us see more clearly His wisdom as we see His perfect plan
- It will help us see more clearly His greatness and power to work all things according to His will and plan; and

The study of the end times should always lead us to the Gospel and to Jesus Christ!

- If it doesn't then we have the complete wrong understanding of the end times for like all aspects of theology, eschatology is all about the Gospel of Jesus Christ! It is all about Him saving sinners and giving them eternal life with Him!

Can you say like hymn writer...

More about Jesus let me learn,
More of His holy will discern;
Spirit of God, my Teacher be,
Showing the things of Christ to me.

More about Jesus on His throne,
Riches in glory all His own;
More of His Kingdom's sure increase;
More of His coming, Prince of Peace.