Understanding the End Times 2017

The Bible has much to say about how the world will end, in fact, we know that the world will end because the Bible has prophesied its end. When we study this matter in the Bible we call it Eschatology, meaning the study of the eschaton (the word used for “last days” in the New Testament). In the major sections of the Bible that discuss the last days, or “end times,” the major event that is in focus is the Second Coming of Christ. When we see the Second Coming (“parousia” is often the Greek for “coming”) in many places in the Scripture, a whole host of events and outcomes are prophesied to come to pass. Also, in many texts, there are chronological indicators that give a sequence and order of fulfilment to these events. These texts are, but not limited to Daniel chapters 7-12, Jesus’ Olivet Discourse (Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21), 1Corinthians 15:23-28, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and of course the book of Revelation chapters 6-22. As we piece together the unfolding of these future events from the study of end times or the last days (eschatology), we come to have a clearer picture of how the current age will end, when Jesus Christ comes again to save His people and bring judgment on a world of unbelievers who have rejected His offer of salvation. This study of Eschatology is often working at harmonizing the different passages of prophecy that discuss these matters, and gaining a clear picture of what God has said about how the world will come to a terrible end, as His judgment is brought to bear upon a world ripe for His wrath, something His prophets have warned the world of people about for thousands of years.

In this consideration, one of the clearest and most chronologically organized texts is the book of Revelation. It has a section (chapters 6-22), that has the Second Coming of Christ in view, including the few years leading up to His return (the Great Tribulation) and the time period following His return, the Millennium and the future Eternal State. Chapters 6-19 lay out a somewhat difficult set of visions exposing the few years directly preceding His return called the Great Tribulation, and chapters 19-22 lay out the time following His return, the Millennium and the Eternal State (or Kingdom). Some scholars see chapters 6-19 as picturing the entire church age, but that is a minority view which shall be given little to no consideration in this study. Because these events are laid out in some chronology, they have become the focus of much discussion and controversy, and therefore the object of much study and the differing positions that result from this study of Eschatology. This study will highlight several of these time periods (The Millennium, Tribulation, Antichrist, resurrections and judgments, and the Eternal State) and examine biblical texts which speak of them to seek to harmonize and gain a clear picture of end time events. God has said so much about the close of this age and the age to come, that we can have a sure knowledge of these events generally, but a little more difficulty in sorting out some of the details. Many of the details can be complex and difficult to understand, but the major general points are rather clear. For example, we know that Christ is coming again in a visible, bodily, and earthly return to destroy evil and bring judgment on all the nations of mankind, and resurrect His people of all ages, and give them glorified immortal bodies and eternal life. This is sure and very clear. But the exact sequence of events as this unfolds is not so clear and this accounts for the complexity and controversy. Nevertheless, Scripture says much about these issues. Because God has said so much and highlighted these matters in Scripture, this
makes this study of end times an important matter for His people to know. Theological textbooks almost always include a section discussing Eschatology because it is a major doctrine (teaching) from the Bible, both Old and New Testaments.

**Futurism and Preterism**

There are some students of the Bible who believe that many of the events of prophecy have already happened (Preterism), where others believe that there is yet much to take place in the future (Futurism). Below is information provided by Wikipedia with a few modifications.

Futurism is a Christian eschatological view that interprets portions of the Book of Revelation, the Book of Daniel, and the Olivet Discourse as future events in a literal, physical, apocalyptic, and global context.

Preterism is a Christian eschatological view which interprets some (Partial Preterism) or all (Full Preterism) prophecies of the Bible as events which have already happened. This school of thought interprets the Book of Daniel as referring to events that happened in the 2nd century BC, while seeing the prophecies of Revelation as events that happened in the first century AD. Preterism holds that Ancient Israel finds its continuation or fulfillment in the Christian Church at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Adherents of preterism are commonly known as preterists. Preterism teaches that either all (Full Preterism) or a majority (Partial Preterism) of the Olivet discourse had come to pass by AD 70.

**Partial preterism** - Partial preterism (often referred to as orthodox preterism or classical preterism) may hold that most eschatological prophecies, such as the destruction of Jerusalem, the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, and the advent of the Day of the Lord as a "judgment-coming" of Christ, were fulfilled either in AD 70 or during the persecution of Christians under the Emperor Nero. Some partial preterists may believe that the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, and the advent of the Day of the Lord as a "judgment-coming" of Christ, were not historically fulfilled. Some partial preterists identify "Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17–18) with the pagan Roman Empire, though some, such as N.T. Wright, David Chilton, and Kenneth Gentry identify it with the city of Jerusalem. Most interpretations identify Nero as the Beast, while his mark is often interpreted as the stamped image of the emperor's head on every coin of the Roman Empire: the stamp on the hand or in the mind of all, without which no one could buy or sell. However, others believe the Book of Revelation was written after Nero's suicide in AD 68, and identify the Beast with another emperor. The Catholic Encyclopedia states that Revelation was "written during the latter part of the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, probably in AD 95 or 96". Many Protestant scholars agree. The Second Coming, resurrection of the dead, and Final Judgment however, have not yet occurred in the partial preterist system.

**Full preterism** - Full preterism differs from partial preterism in that full preterists believe that the destruction of Jerusalem fulfilled all eschatological or "end times" events, including the resurrection of the dead and Jesus' Second Coming, or Parousia, and the Final Judgment. Other names of full preterism include: preterism (because the term itself means "past") consistent preterism, true preterism, hyper-preterism (a
pejorative term used by opponents of preterists). Full preterists argue that a literal reading of Matthew 16:28 (where Jesus tells the disciples that some of them will not taste death until they see him coming in his kingdom) places the second coming in the first century. This precludes a physical second coming of Christ. Instead, the second coming is symbolic of a "judgment" against Jerusalem, said to have taken place with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. For this reason, some people also call full preterism "the AD 70 Doctrine." Detractors of full preterism often refer to the school as hyper-preterism. Many evangelicals regard full preterism as outside of Christian orthodoxy. [end Wiki articles]

Concerning Preterism, let me simply say a few things. Obviously there are many prophesies in the Bible that have been fulfilled. Especially parts of the Book of Daniel and the Olivet Discourse. However, both Daniel and the Olivet Discourse clearly have future events in view at the close of this age, when Jesus Second Coming will occur, and many of the events surrounding His coming as well. Even Partial Preterists acknowledge that many prophetic events have yet to occur. Surely the second Coming of Christ, the great Tribulation and the global cataclysmic judgments of Revelation chapters 6-19 have NOT taken place yet. This fact surely puts full preterism outside of Christian orthodoxy and makes some of the doctrines taught by them heresy (especially that there will not be a visible, bodily, and earthly return of Christ to destroy evil and bring judgment on all the nations of mankind, and resurrect His people of all ages, and give them glorified immortal bodies and eternal life). Partial preterism however remains within Christian orthodoxy because it maintains that there will be a visible, bodily, and earthly return to destroy evil and bring judgment on all the nations of mankind, and resurrect His people of all ages, and give them glorified immortal bodies and eternal life. However, partial preterism has some work to do in acknowledging the future nature of the many end time events (which many partial preterists deny, but some acknowledge the possibility of) such as (The Millennium, Tribulation, Antichrist, resurrections and judgments, and the Eternal State).

Also most Futurists acknowledge that some/many of the events of Daniel and the Olivet Discourse have been fulfilled at some point in history already, yet hold that most or all of the events of Daniel and the Olivet Discourse have a yet future fulfillment at the close of this age. Partial preterism typically holds that all of Revelation chapters 6-19 have been fulfilled in AD70, while Futurists hold that these events are yet future, in the time of the great tribulation. It is my opinion that the book of Revelation chapters 6-19 have not been fulfilled, which is plainly obvious most who read it, and that to dismiss the cataclysmic judgments of God that are there said to come upon the entire world is to do violence to the straightforward and obvious instructions of the text. Therefore Futurism should be embraced because of its obvious straightforward reading of the texts, and for much of the argumentation that is to follow in this study.
Defining Millennialism - February 2017

Defining Millennialism – The idea or concept of millennialism is derived from the word “Millennium” which means “a thousand years” and is referred to six times in Revelation 20:1-10. It speaks of a specific (or general) period of time on earth when specific events spoken of in the passage will take place.

There have been three major views among futurist biblical interpreters throughout the years.

- **Amillennialism** – Realized Millennialism, or the Millennium is now.
  - The 1000 years are *not* literal.

- **Post-Millennialism** – Christ will return *after* the Millennium
  - The 1000 years may or may *not* be literal.

- **Pre-Millennialism** - Christ will return *before* the Millennium
  - The 1000 years *are* literal.

Revelation 20:1-10 - 20:1 And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

7 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. NASB