Gazing at the Future: A Study of the End Times

Course Overview

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I. Basic Issues

A. What is “Eschatology?”

1. Definition: the doctrine of the “last things”
   a. Greek word *eschatos* = “last”

*1 John 2:18  Dear children, this is the last hour*

*Hebrews 1:2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son*

b. Generally considered, the study of final events both from a personal and a universal standpoint

2. Always a tremendous amount of interest and speculation
   a. People very concerned about the future
   b. Many have become famous or wealthy making spectacular predictions
   c. Eschatological speculation a popular theme in every era of church history
   d. Of special interest (and danger): linking current events to biblical prophecy

B. Personal vs. General Eschatology

1. Personal eschatology: death, intermediate state, resurrection, judgment, eternal state

2. General eschatology: rise and fall of nations, future history of Israel, Antichrist, cataclysmic events in the heavens and on earth, final battle, Kingdom of God, millennium, judgment day, New Heavens and New Earth

C. “Already and Not Yet”

1. Also known as “Inaugurated Eschatology”
2. Basic concepts:
   a. the First Coming of Christ began the end times
   b. the Kingdom of God began, but will grow and grow to perfection
   c. the whole “Church Age” occurs in the last times
   d. there is not an essential difference between what the church has experienced for the last two thousand years and what we will experience to the end; but there will be a difference in intensity, in degree

3. Key passages: the Kingdom of God… “Already here, not yet come”
   a. The Kingdom is here already
      
      *ESV Matthew 4:17* From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

      *ESV Matthew 12:28* But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

   b. The Kingdom has not yet come
      
      *Matthew 6:10* your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

D. Recapitulation: “As it was…. , so it will be”

1. key ideas: history is essentially linear, but events occur that will be repeated in some manner in the final generation

On the linearity of history:

*Revelation 22:13* I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

On repetition of events:

*Matthew 24:37* As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

2. Implications:
   a. Persecutions, sufferings, cataclysms will be repeated
   b. Jerusalem was surrounded by armies, may well be surrounded again
   c. The have been many Antichrists, there will be one final Antichrist
d. Of special interest: the rebuilding of the temple

E. Prophecy and God’s Exhaustive Foreknowledge

1. God’s exhaustive foreknowledge essential to this study

2. God’s knowledge of the future sets Him apart from every other being in the universe

*Isaiah 42:8-9* "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. 9 See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

*Isaiah 41:22-24* "Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, 23 tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear. 24 But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; he who chooses you is detestable.

*Isaiah 45:21-22* Declare what is to be, present it-- let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. 22 "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.

3. An example of God’s astounding ability to foretell the future through a prophet: Daniel 11 (see final page)

4. Recent attacks on the concept of God’s exhaustive foreknowledge of the future

   a. “Open theism”… the idea that God cannot really know the future decisions of free will beings

   b. The future is thus “open”, not foreordained

   c. This is a heresy of the greatest implications

   d. If true, it would make studying eschatology worthless

F. Major Systems

1. Premillennialism

   a. There will be a literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth

   b. Christ’s Second Coming will occur before this thousand year reign
c. Various types of Premillennialism: most noteworthy are “Historic Premillennialism” and “Dispensational Premillennialism”

d. General description

“The premillennialist believes that the return of Christ will be preceded by signs including wars, famines, earthquakes, the preaching of the gospel to all nations, a great apostasy, the appearance of Antichrist, and the great tribulation. These events culminate in the second coming, which will result in a period of peace and righteousness when Christ and his saints control the world. This rule is established suddenly through supernatural methods rather than gradually over a long period of time by means of the conversion of individually. The Jews will figure prominently in the future age because the premillennialist believes that they will be converted in large numbers and will again have a prominent place in God’s work. Nature will have the curse removed from it, and even the desert will produce abundant crops. Christ will restrain evil during this age by the use of authoritarian power. Despite the idyllic conditions of this golden age, there is a final rebellion of wicked people against Christ and his saints. This exposure of evil is crushed by God, the non-Christian dead are resurrected, the last judgment conducted, and the eternal states of heaven and hell are established.” [Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, p. 715]

Famous for charts: “If you can’t chart it, don’t believe it!!”

H.A. Ironside’s “Revelation Chart”
II. Topics and Supporting Scriptures

A. The Kingdom Arrives
Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

B. The End Times Begin

Hebrews 1:1-2 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

C. The Intermediate State

What happens to the soul at death, before the resurrection?

1. for the Christian:

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

2. for the non-Christian

Luke 16:23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

D. The Spread of the Gospel

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

E. The Tribulation

Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now-- and never to be equaled again.

F. The Apostasy

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs

Matthew 24:12-13 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

G. The Antichrist

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.
H. Signs in the Heavens, Judgments on the Earth (Seals, Trumpets, Bowls)

Matthew 24:29 "Immediately after the distress of those days "'the sun will be
darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

Revelation 8:7-10 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire
mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth
was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was
burned up. 8 The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge
mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into
blood, 9 a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships
were destroyed. 10 The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star,
blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs
of water.

I. The Salvation of Israel

Romans 11:26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come
from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

J. The Second Coming of Christ

Matthew 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all
the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on
the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

K. The Rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a
loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of
God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive
and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord
in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

L. The Final Battle (Armageddon)

Revelation 16:16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is
called Armageddon.

Revelation 19:19-21 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies
gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. 20
But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed
the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who
had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them
were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. 21 The rest of them were
killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and
all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.
M. The Millennium

Revelation 20:1-6  And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.  He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.  He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.  I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.  (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.  Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

N. The General Resurrection

John 5:28-29  "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out-- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

O. The Final Judgment

Revelation 20:11-12  Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.  And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

P. The New Heavens and New Earth

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Revelation 21:1  Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

Q. The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:2-3  I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.  And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."
III. The Benefits of Studying Eschatology

A. Living in Hope

*Romans 8:23-25* Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

B. Living in Wisdom, Ready at Any Moment

*Matthew 24:42-47* "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. 47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

C. Boldness in Evangelism

*Matthew 24:14* And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

D. Personal Holiness

*2 Peter 3:11-14* Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

E. Storing Up Treasure for Eternity

*Matthew 6:19-21* "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

F. Fervency, Confidence, and Power in Prayer
Matthew 6:9-10  "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

1 John 5:14-15  This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask-- we know that we have what we asked of him.

G. Courage in the Face of Death

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14  Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

Job 19:25-27  I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!
God’s Awesome Foreknowledge on Display
Daniel 11:1-45

122 uses of the word “will” in one chapter!!

And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.) 2 "Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings WILL appear in Persia, and then a fourth, who WILL be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he WILL stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. 3 Then a mighty king WILL appear, who WILL rule with great power and do as he pleases. 4 After he has appeared, his empire WILL be broken up and parcelled out toward the four winds of heaven. It WILL not go to his descendants, nor WILL it have the power he exercised, because his empire WILL be uprooted and given to others. 5 "The king of the South WILL become strong, but one of his commanders WILL become even stronger than he and WILL rule his own kingdom with great power. 6 After some years, they WILL become allies. The daughter of the king of the South WILL go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she WILL not retain her power, and he and his power WILL not last. In those days she WILL be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her. 7 "One from her family line WILL arise to take her place. He WILL attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he WILL fight against them and be victorious. 8 He WILL also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he WILL leave the king of the North alone. 9 Then the king of the North WILL invade the realm of the king of the South but WILL retreat to his own country. 10 His sons WILL prepare for war and assemble a great army, which WILL sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress. 11 "Then the king of the South WILL march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who WILL leave the king of the North alone. Then the king of the North WILL advance with a huge army fully equipped. 14 "In those times many WILL rise against the king of the South. The violent men among your own people WILL rebel in fulfillment of the vision, but without success. 15 Then the king of the North WILL come and build up siege ramps and WILL capture a fortified city. The forces of the South WILL be powerless to resist; even their best troops WILL not have the strength to stand. 16 The invader WILL do as he pleases; no one WILL be able to stand against him. He WILL establish himself in the Beautiful Land and WILL have the power to destroy it. 17 He WILL determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and WILL make an alliance with the king of the South. And he WILL give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans WILL not succeed or help him. 18 Then he WILL turn his attention to the coastlands and WILL take many of them, but a commander WILL put an end to his insolence and WILL turn his insolence back upon him. 19 After this, he WILL turn back toward the fortresses of his own country but WILL stumble and fall, to be seen no more. 20 "His successor WILL send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. In a few years, however, he WILL be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle. 21 "He WILL be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He WILL invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he WILL seize it through intrigue. 22 Then an overwhelming army WILL be swept away before
him; both it and a prince of the covenant WILL be destroyed. 23 After coming to an agreement with him, he WILL act deceitfully, and with only a few people he WILL rise to power. 24 When the richest provinces feel secure, he WILL invade them and WILL achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He WILL distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He WILL plot the overthrow of fortresses-- but only for a time. 25 "With a large army he WILL stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South WILL wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he WILL not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. 26 Those who eat from the king's provisions WILL try to destroy him; his army WILL be swept away, and many WILL fall in battle. 27 The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, WILL sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end WILL still come at the appointed time. 28 The king of the North WILL return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart WILL be set against the holy covenant. He WILL take action against it and then return to his own country. 29 "At the appointed time he WILL invade the South again, but this time the outcome WILL be different from what it was before. 30 Ships of the western coastlands WILL oppose him, and he WILL lose heart. Then he WILL turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He WILL return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 "His armed forces WILL rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and WILL abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they WILL set up the abomination that causes desolation. 32 With flattery he WILL corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God WILL firmly resist him. 33 "Those who are wise WILL instruct many, though for a time they WILL fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. 34 When they fall, they WILL receive a little help, and many who are not sincere WILL join them. 35 Some of the wise WILL stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it WILL still come at the appointed time. 36 "The king WILL do as he pleases. He WILL exalt and magnify himself above every god and WILL say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He WILL be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. 37 He WILL show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor WILL he regard any god, but WILL exalt himself above them all. 38 Instead of them, he WILL honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he WILL honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. 39 He WILL attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and WILL greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He WILL make them rulers over many people and WILL distribute the land at a price. 40 "At the time of the end the king of the South WILL engage him in battle, and the king of the North WILL storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He WILL invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. 41 He WILL also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries WILL fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon WILL be delivered from his hand. 42 He WILL extend his power over many countries; Egypt WILL not escape. 43 He WILL gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. 44 But reports from the east and the north WILL alarm him, and he WILL set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. 45 He WILL pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he WILL come to his end, and no one WILL help him.