

Sunday, November 21, 2010—Right Division 101: Exploring the Ages to Come

Introduction/Review

- Literal Interpretation—the Bible says what it means and means what it says.
- Comparative Principle –the Bible interprets itself and defines its own terms (I Corinthians 2:13)
- Dispensational Method—the Bible needs to be rightly divided (II Timothy 2:15), God has dealt differently with different people during different times.
- Three-Fold Division—the Holy Spirit through the pen of Paul gives us God’s three-fold division of time: 1) Time Past (Ephesians 2:11), 2) But Now (Ephesians 2:13), Ages to Come (Ephesians 2:17)
- This morning I would like to focus our attention on the end of the But Now (current dispensation of Grace) and the major events of the Ages to Come.

Wrath to Come

- Even novice students of God’s Word know that the Old Testament prophets predict a future day of calamity and distress upon the earth. Most people have heard of Biblical terms such as Anti-Christ, Mark of the Beast, Tribulation Period, Second Coming, Armageddon, Millennium yet most people have no idea how these events fit together.
- Matthew 3:2—much is made in Christina circles about the kingdom of heaven being near with the ministries of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the 12 Apostles.
- Matthew 3:7—less attention is paid to the fact that with the proclamation that the kingdom was near so to was the wrath.
- Daniel 7:15-27—along with scores of other passages established that a time of wrath and tribulation precedes the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon the earth.
- Daniel 9:24-27—all of these events were being government by a specific prophet time schedule spelled out in the book of Daniel.
- Acts 2:34-35—is a quotation of Psalm 110:1. Jesus Christ ascended into heaven in Acts One, Peter now tells is audience that Christ is seated at the right of God until the time arrives when he makes his foes his footstool.
- Acts 7:54-55—Stephen looked upon in to heaven and saw Jesus standing on the right of God. According to the prophetic time schedule time had arrived for God to pour out his wrath.

- What happened to the wrath and the kingdom? It was postponed so God could usher in the previously unpredicted (mystery) dispensation of Grace.

Wrath Avoided

- I Thessalonians 1:10—Paul writing to the body of Christ tells us that through Jesus Christ we have been delivered from the wrath to come.
- I Thessalonians 5:9—God has not appointed the body of Christ to wrath. The formation of the body of Christ interrupted the prophet program when God was getting ready to pour out his wrath. Those of us who trust Christ during the current church age are not appointed to take part in the wrath to come. How then do we escape the horrors of the tribulation period?
- I Thessalonians 4:13-18—the catching away of the body of Christ (rapture) is the mechanism through which the church escapes the wrath of God.
- I Thessalonians 5:1-9—Paul has already instructed the Thessalonians about these issues. Paul recognized that the entire dispensation of Grace fits into what is known prophetically as the night time.
 - John 8:12, 9:4-5—Christ says that when He is in the world it is day time.
 - Daniel 9:25-27—the dispensation of grace fits into Daniel prophecy during a gap between the ending of the 69th week and the beginning of the 70th week which begins with the signing of the covenant between the anti-Christ and Israel.
 - Malachi 4:2—describes the 2nd coming of Christ like the rising of the Sun (Matthew 13:43). During the kingdom Christ is back in the world so it is day time again. That is why the second coming is compared to the raising of the Sun.
- I Corinthians 15:51—it is fitting that an unknown age concludes with a previously unknown event.

Prophecy Resumed

- The resuming of prophetic events on earth is being hindered by the presence of the body of Christ.
- II Thessalonians 2:5—when Paul was with them he had instructed them in all of the information regarding the Ages to Come.
- II Thessalonians 2:6—Paul tells them that they already know what “withholdeth.:

 - “withholdeth”—means to hold down, hold fast, restrain
 - Luke 4:42—stayed
 - II Thessalonians 2:7—letteh (to hinder)
 - Something is withholding the revelation of the man of sin/son of perdition, i.e. anti-Christ

- II Thessalonians 2:7—Paul tells the Thessalonians that the mystery of iniquity was already working in the dispensation of Grace. It is still working today.
 - We know from verse 6 that something is “withholding” or hindering the mystery of iniquity from reaching its culmination.
 - The “what” of verse 6 is now said to be a “he” in verse 7. Someone is withholding the revelation of the man of sin and hindering the full onset of the mystery of iniquity. This person will continue to “let” until he be taken out of the way. Once the restrainer is removed thy mystery of iniquity is given free course and the man of sin will be revealed.
 - “Then” after the withholder/letter/hinderer is gone that wicked will be revealed, which is the man of sin/son perdition, i.e. anti-Christ in verse 3.
 - Who is “he” that letteth?
 - Ephesians 2:14-18—Paul calls the body of Christ the “one new man.” The restraining power in II Thess. Is the church the body of Christ
 - Paul says there is going to be a time when the restraining force will be “taken out of the way.”
 - Job 24:24—equates being taken out of the way with being cut off.

- Romans 11:13-25—Paul is speaking to gentiles. Verse 22 Paul talks about the gentiles being cut off for failing to stand by faith. Verse 25 Israel’s blindness will continue until the fullness of the gentiles be come in. The fullness of the gentiles is when God cuts them off from the Olive tree. The result is the church the body of Christ is taken out of the way at the rapture.

- With the restraining influence of the body of Christ removed nothing will hinder the onset of the Ages to Come and fulfillment of prophecy.

Summary of the Ages to Come

- We have already seen the Ages to Come entail the rise of the Anti-Christ and his signing of a 7 year covenant with Israel thereby resuming the prophetic time clock of Daniel 9.

- Matthew 24:3-14—summaizes the events of the first half of the tribulation.

- Matthew 24:15—the abomination of desolation occurs in the middle of the tribulation period.
 - Daniel 9:27
 - II Thessalonians 2:4

- Matthew 24:29-31—describes the 2nd coming of Christ immediately following the tribulation.
 - Revelation 19:11-16

- Revelation 19:17-21—depicts the battle of Armageddon

- Revelation 20:1-3—Satan is bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years

- Revelation 20:4-6—the first resurrection of Kingdom saints to reign and rule with Christ for a 1,000 years. The Bible is premillennial, Jesus Christ returns to set up his kingdom we don't usher it like postmillennialism teaches.
- Revelation 20:7-10—after the 1,000 years Satan is loosed from the bottomless pit, leads one final rebellion against God, and is thrown into the Lake of Fire.
- Revelation 20:11-15—explains the Great White Throne Judgment and the handing out of eternal sentences to the lost.
- Revelation 21—depicts the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth.
- Ephesians 2:7—the expression Ages to Come is plural thus indicating more than one ages is yet future from where we are today.
 - Dispensation of the Kingdom
 - Dispensation of the Fulness of Times (Ephesians 1:10)—where all things in heaven and earth are one again centered in Jesus Christ.
- Ephesians 2:11-12—in Time Past God deal with humanity on the basis of a distinction between Jew and Gentile.
- Ephesians 2:13-18—in the current But Now (dispensation of Grace) there is no difference between Jew and gentile.
- For a large portion of the Ages to Come after the body of Christ is taken out of the way God will reinstitute the time past distinction between Jew and gentiles and brings to completion what he started with Israel.
 - Romans 11:26-27
 - Isaiah 2:1-5