

Understanding the End Times

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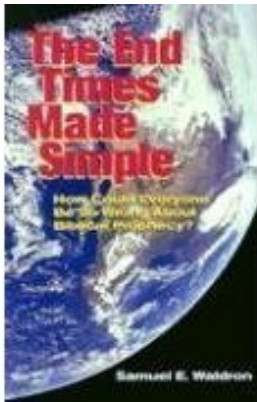
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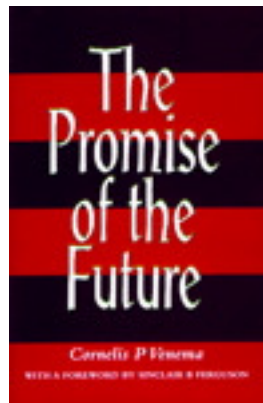
1. Introduction, 2/25/09

Resources

- Books I would recommend:



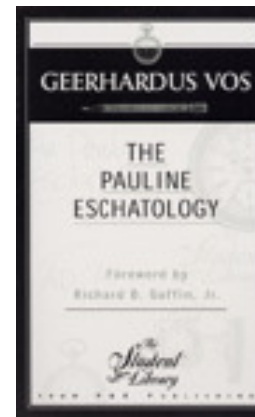
The best end-times book available for lay readers. Terrific.



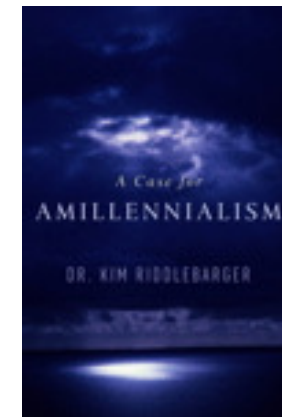
Another terrific book. More pastoral and devotional.



More academic than Waldron, but also more thorough. A classic.



Extremely technical and difficult to read. Also, perhaps the finest theology book of the 20th century.



An outstanding study and defense of the amillennial position.

Overview

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mar 1:15).

- What is Eschatology?
 - Eschatos = Last Things
 - Logos = Word or Doctrine
 - Eschatology = Doctrine of the Last Things
- Two ways we speak about eschatology
 - *Future* eschatology: those things yet to come
 - *Inaugurated* or *Realized* eschatology: understanding the present in its relation to the end, and the believer's present enjoyment of end-time blessings.
- Anthony Hoekema: "Biblical eschatology will be seriously impoverished if we do not include in it the present state of the believer and the present phase of the kingdom of God."

Basic Principles

- How We Are Going to Approach the Bible's End-Times Teaching
 - Use clear passages to interpret difficult ones
 - Use the Bible's literal teaching to understand its figurative teaching
 - First, study the Bible's general teaching, then look at the details.

Topical Agenda

- Introduction: The Meaning of History
- The Four Major Millennial Views
- Realized Eschatology
 - The Two Age Structure of History
 - The Kingdom of God
- Future Eschatology
 - Death & Life after Death
 - The Intermediate State
 - Signs of the Times
 - The Second Coming of Christ
 - The Resurrection of the Body
 - The Final Judgment
 - Eternal Punishment
 - The New Heavens and New Earth

Greek View of History

- History as a cycle (endless repetition)
- No real significance to history; nothing really achieved or contributed
- Time and history are imperfect embodiments of timeless ideals
- No ultimate purpose or goal; man trapped in time
- Salvation is being freed from time to eternity, from history to ideal reality

Atheistic Existential View of History

- No pattern or meaning to history
- No movement to goal; all is a meaningless succession of events
- Man is left to sheer individualism
- Meaning is only found through the experience of authentic choice.
- Albert Camus' *The Plague*.

Christian View of History

1. God discloses His purposes in history; history is the working out of God's purposes in time.

- History thus reveals God
- History reveals God's redemptive purpose

Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children... To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him (Deut 4:9-10, 35).

2. God is the Lord of History

- “God is King and acts in history to bring history to a divinely directed goal” (G. E. Ladd).
“according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will” (Eph 1:11)
“He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (Act 17:26)
- That God is the Lord of history implies that all that occurs serves his purpose” (Gen. 50:20).
- History fulfills the sovereign purposes of God for individuals and nations.
- God gives meaning and direction to history (Rom. 8:28), and reveals these through His Word (Eph. 1:9-10).

Christian View of History, cont.

3. Christ is the center of history

- There is one unique and non-repeatable act at the center of history: the death of God the Son
- For Christians, the decisive event of human history is not future, but past. Its significance shapes all history afterwards.
 - The first coming of Christ was like D-day in World War II, in which the victory was accomplished and assured. Still, they looked forward to V-day, when the war would be over. Likewise, Christians live between D-day and V-day. The decisive victory has been won, but we are still fighting.
- Human history is thus dominated by Jesus Christ
 - His triumph over man's sin through the cross, reconciling sinners to God, provides *the story* for mankind (2 Cor. 5:19).
 - The Christian message of creation-fall-redemption-glory is not merely *a* story for mankind, but *the only* story that explains history.

4. The new and final age of history has already begun in Christ

- “Since Christ has appeared on this earth, has been crucified, and has risen from the dead, the new age has been inaugurated” (A. Hoekema).

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 1:13).
- Christians therefore live the new and eternal life in the old and passing world.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2Co 5:17).

εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις

Christian View of History, concl.

5. All history is moving toward God's goal of the new heavens and the new earth.
 - This new age has been inaugurated with the first coming of Christ.
 - The new age will be consummated with the return of Christ in the second coming.
 - In the time between the resurrection and second coming of Christ, gospel missions is the primary purpose for believers (Mt. 28:19-20; Lk. 24:45-47)
 - Christ's coming is "delayed" by his saving purpose
 - "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).
 - Christians presently live in the tension of the "already-not yet".
 - We enjoy the "powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:4) while living in the old age of sin and death.
 - Though already children of God, "what we will be has not yet appeared" (1Jo 3:2).
 - Luke's Great Commission: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk. 24:46-47).
 - History involves two lines of developments: two peoples, two principles, two powers, two destinies.
 - "Let both [good and evil] grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" (Mat 13:30)
 - Evil and Good co-exist in history; only in the end does good finally triumph. Until the end, there will always be ambiguity.
 - What man experiences now determines what he will experience in the age to come
 - "it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb 9:27).
 - Christians are basically optimistic in viewing history
 - Heidelberg Catechism 58: Q. What comfort do you derive from the article of the life everlasting? A. That, since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, after this life I shall possess perfect bliss, such as eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man – therein to praise God forever."