

# **ESCHATOLOGICAL Events**



*Literal or Symbolic?*

by:

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## ESCHATOLOGICAL EVENTS

### *Literal or Symbolic?*

If you have recently gone to a Christian bookstore and browsed through its book section you may have come away wondering just what all those books dealing with **prophecy, end time events, the last days, etc.** are all about. You *may* or *may not* have an opinion regarding these matters. In this folder I am sharing a brief look at **eschatology** from **my perspective**. The word “**eschatology**” is a theological word **meaning**: “*the doctrine of last things.*”

Christians are **divided** in their opinions, understanding and interpretation of these matters. Some Christians are convinced that their views on eschatological events are the only correct views, hence they are dogmatic and unbending. Other Christians remain open to these matters and seek to avoid an unbending dogmatic approach. **Whatever one’s understanding** regarding eschatology our differences **should not** be cause for dividing us into warring camps against one another.

The bottom line is that you, as a child of God, need to decide for yourself as to what you believe Scripture is teaching. Keep in mind that **every Christian has the Holy Spirit** who promises to **guide and give understanding** to “**rightly divide the word of truth**”. You are encouraged to **look up each of the following biblical references**.

#### The Abrahamic Covenant Genesis 12:1-3

This covenant was given by God to Abraham. The provisions of this covenant include:

- “**I will make you a great nation.**” The nation referred to is Israel, i.e., *the Jews*. The children of Israel originated with **Abraham**, through his son **Isaac**

and grandson **Jacob** who was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

- “**I will bless you and make your name great.**” Abraham was the biological father of *both* Jews and Arabs and the spiritual father of Christians.
- “**In you all families of the earth shall be blessed.**” Jesus the Christ [Messiah] was a descendent of Abraham through the royal line of David. In Christ the entire earth has been and continues to be blessed.
- “**I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you.**” *Does this mean that whoever blesses the Jews will be blessed and whoever curses the Jews will be cursed? What do you think?* Is this literal or symbolic? I personally take this promise to be literal. Therefore, I am convinced that Christians are to bless and love the Jews.

Those of us who interpret **the Abrahamic Covenant literally** believe that it is **unconditional** and **remains in force** with the Jews. Those Christians who interpret this covenant **symbolically** believe that its provisions have been **transferred** to Abraham’s spiritual children, the church. They view the church as the New Israel **replacing** the old Israel. Their position is often referred to as “**replacement theology**” and is held by the majority of mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. As a reforming Christian I *do not* believe that the majority opinion in these matters is also in line with biblical teaching.

#### The Palestinian Land Covenant Genesis 13:14-16; 15:18-20; 17:6-8

*Who does the land of Palestine [Israel] belong to?* Christian are also divided on this question. Some Christians hold that the entire land belongs to the Jews, whereas other Christians hold that this is no longer the case. *Who is correct?* Whatever your position I believe

that it is **incorrect** to assume that **the Arabs** who live in that land have no place in the plan of God. The name **Ishmael**, who was the father of the Arabs, means: “**God hears.**” See – Gen. 17:20. God promises to make the descendants of Ishmael a great people. **The Arabs** have become a great people. *However, the Land Covenant is promised* to the descendants of Abraham through his son Isaac. See – Gen. 17:21; 26:2-5. The debate is whether or not this covenant remains applicable to the Jews and Israel today or has it been aborted? I believe that it *has not* been aborted.

#### Restoration of the land of Israel Ezekiel 36:26-37:28

In 1947 the **United Nations** declared that the Jews, who had been scattered throughout the world, were to have their own homeland, i.e., **the State of Israel**. In **May 1948** the land was partitioned. History reveals that the Jews had been driven from their land after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. As a result of the UN action millions of Jews have returned to the land. **Are the Jews entitled to the land or not?** This debate continues today among Christians although I believe that the returning of the Jews to the Land is another proof that this covenant is unconditional and is being fulfilled in our present day.

The passages from Ezekiel, along with many other biblical passages, teach that there would be **a return of the Jews back to the land**. Unfortunately some Christians and Jews have become **anti-Arab**. Some Christians in their love for the children of Israel **seem** to have become heartless in their attitudes toward the Arabs. **Other Christians display anti-Semitic** attitudes toward the Jews and blame Israel for all the woes facing the Middle East today. Though the Israeli government is secular and quite ungodly, yet as Christians I believe that what is happening in that part of the world is in the plan of God sometimes in spite of the government.

As Christians: what is our responsibility toward the Jews and the Arabs? I believe that our responsibility is to pray, love, and seek to understand both the Jews and Arabs. See – Psalm 122. We must never forget that God loves both the Jews and the Arabs as well as for all people of the world. See – John 3:16-17.

### The Return of Jesus Christ Acts 1:10-11

The majority of Christians believe that Christ will return at some point in time. Some Christians believe that Christ's coming referred to in Acts one is symbolic. I take this promise literally and along with other Christians anticipate Christ's return in spite of differing views over the details of that return. See – Titus 2:13; Revelation 22:20.

### The Rapture 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The word "rapture" is not in the Bible. However, it is a teaching the many evangelical Christians hold. The word "rapture" is taken from the Greek word "harpazo" which means, "caught-up." Those of us who hold to a coming rapture teach that all believing Christians will be raptured or caught-up to be with Christ "in the twinkling of an eye" based on 1 Cor. 15:52. This will not be the end of the world.

Believing in the rapture are nearly all Pentecostals, most Baptists, and many other Christians. However, it needs to be noted that this view is not held by all evangelicals. Reformed theology normally does not hold the rapture view. These Christians teach that Christ's return will be personal and physical when he returns to earth to judge, but no rapture.

### The Tribulation Daniel 9:24-27; 12:1; Mark 13:19; Revelation 7:9-14

What is referred to as "the Tribulation" is understood to be referring to "the time of

Jacob's trouble" in the Hebrew Scriptures. Those of us who accept in this prophecy literally believe that it will be a period of seven years duration divided into two sections of three and one half years each. The second half is called "The Great Tribulation." Again, Christians are divided between those who look for the rapture to occur before the tribulation, others who believe it will occur midway during the tribulation and those who believe that the church will go through the tribulation with Christ returning at the end of the tribulation, i.e., 'pre', 'mid', and 'post' tribulationists. During the tribulation a number of events will occur including the rise of the Antichrist, the 144,000 Jewish witnesses, etc. See – Rev. 7.

### Millennial Kingdom Revelation 20:1-6

A thousand-year reign of Christ following the end of the Tribulation is referred to as the Millennium or Kingdom. As with the tribulation Christians are also divided with three millennial views: pre, post and a-millennial.

Whatever your position relating to these matters that are discussed in this folder always remember that God is Sovereign and the Jesus is Lord! The future is in the hands and plan of God. As Christians we need not become so dogmatic in our interpretations of God's written Word that we allow these matters to divide us. Eschatological events should not be used as scare tactics as some preachers and writers appear to delight in doing.

We invite your inquiry for a listing of literature dealing with many subjects from:

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