

## **Doctrine of Eschatology**

### **The Credibility of Christ**

1. Eschatology is a subsidiary of Systematic Theology and concerns itself with last times.
2. In the area of eschatology there is widespread diversity, leading to a crisis in our time in trying to understand future prophesy.
3. Three major positions have emerged to guide the church.
  - Premillennialism.
  - Postmillennialism.
  - Amillennialism.
4. As the church struggles with the issue of eschatology, its credibility comes into question.
5. In addition, the credibility of the Bible is brought into the discussion, as well as the credibility of Jesus Himself.
6. The teaching of Jesus on last things becomes of paramount importance. If what Jesus taught is proven to be true, then the rest of Scripture can be trusted as well.
7. It is tragic that the attack upon the credibility of Christ, and the Bible, has come, for the most part, from within the church.
8. There are many reasons why the Higher Critics level their attack upon the authenticity of Scripture.
  - Natural human skepticism.
  - A desire for academic superiority.
  - Cultural influence.
  - A personal unwillingness to submit to the Lordship of Christ.
9. Whatever motivates criticism of God's Word, the focus of attack is on eschatology, which makes up at least two thirds of the New Testament.
10. If prophecy is suspect to Higher Criticism, then the rest of the Scripture is suspect. Worst of all, the credibility of Christ is undermined.
11. While many non-believers will accept the idea that Jesus was a great teacher, they resist the idea that He was a true prophet who could accurately foretell the future.
12. The leading presuppositional argument against Christ as a prophet, is that what He predicted did not come to pass within the specific time frame He established.

13. Attention is turned to Matthew 24 where Jesus predicted many events that were to transpire. Then the Lord established a time frame.

- *Matthew 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

14. If the prophecies of Jesus failed to come to pass within the framework of the time He predicted, then Christ would be discredited as a prophet. Indeed, He should have been stoned.

- *Deuteronomy 18:21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? 22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*

15. In 1957, the English atheist, Bertrand Russell, published his infamous work, “Why I am Not a Christian.”

16. After giving a series of objection to historical Christianity, he focused his thoughts on the importance of Jesus to Christian faith. In his opinion, religion in general, and Christianity in particular, is harmful.

17. Russell argued that all of the religious wars, all the witch hunts, all the doctrinal differences, and general hostility produced by religion have been harmful to civilization. He doubted whether or not there was a historical Jesus. Russell did concede that if Jesus did live, He was a moral teacher.

18. One reason why Russell rejected Christ is because of the predictive comments of Christ.

“He certainly thought that his second coming would occur in clouds of glory before the death of all the people who were living at that time” (Bertrand Russell).

19. This criticism is also voiced by Liberal Biblical scholars and critics of the last two hundred years. The presupposition is that Christ got it wrong, and therefore He is discredited, and the Bible as a whole is not to be trusted in prophetic matters.

20. Three texts are cited to support this criticism.

- *Matthew 10:23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.*
- *Matthew 16:28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*
- *Matthew 24:34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

21. In Hebrew terms, a generation is approximately forty years.
22. The argument is that since Jesus did not come again, since He did not appear, since His second Parousia did not take place within the time frame He established, He could not be a prophet, He could not be the Son of God, and the Bible is not altogether trustworthy.
23. In addition to these three critical texts, there are many other passages which Higher Critics point to indicating the early church believed in the nearness of the coming of Christ.
24. The Book of Revelation, the favorite source of speculation, also gave a time frame.
  - *Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.*
25. So, what is to be made of the time frame passages in light of the Second Coming of Christ? Did Christ lie? Was the expectations of the early church wrong?
26. The answer to these false presuppositions, and criticism, lies in understanding the time frame passages and what Jesus meant in each instance.