

Why Aren't Pastors Preaching on End-Times Prophecy?

I have a pastor friend who frequently circumvents potential debates or prolonged discussions about the timing of the "rapture" and other end-times minutiae by simply saying, "I just know that the Lord and I have this agreement: when He comes again, I'm going up!"

It is, perhaps, a wise and witty response, but it is not exactly a satisfying, eschatological doctrinal statement on which to hang your theological hat until the appearing of our Lord from heaven.

If our congregations do not get regular biblical instruction and inspiration about the last days and our Lord's Second Coming, we and they are in danger of deception by the devil (Rev. 12:9), his demons (1 Tim. 4:1-2), or—eventually—his end-time agents, the Beast (the Antichrist, Man of Sin, Son of Destruction; 2 Thess. 2:3, 7-12; Rev. 13) and the false prophet (Rev. 16:13, 19:20).

Predictive prophecy concerning the last days seems to be a purposefully-neglected facet of ministry, for some pastors and Bible teachers. Instead of embracing and teaching the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27b), many modern expositors seem to strategically avoid end-times eschatology, all together.

As shepherds of the flock of God, whom the Holy Spirit has made accountable overseers, end-times study and teaching are critical (Acts 20:27-31). Pastors are admonished to faithfully "give attention to reading, exhortation, and doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13). Avoiding the "hard to understand" parts (2 Pet. 3:15-16) is not an acceptable strategy for these end times.

Consider Paul's charge to the young pastor Timothy, regarding the last days:

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but they will gather to themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, having itching ears, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and turn to myths (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Eschatology is not meant to encourage idle speculation or controversy. Rather, it is meant to encourage us to witness for Christ and serve Him faithfully, as we watch, wait and do business in the present until He returns in the future. See Matthew 24:46, 25:13; 2 Peter 3:12.

Throughout the history of the church, many Christians have become so consumed with predictive prophecies that they have neglected their present realities and responsibilities. For instance, when the believers in Thessalonica heard the “fake news” that Christ had already come and established His kingdom on earth (2 Thess. 2:2) some of them used this news to excuse themselves from working and engaged in gossip as busybodies (2 Thess. 3:11-12).

The apostle Paul corrected their theology, priorities and practices, insisting the local believers admonish the erring brothers. If they did not self-correct, they were to socially shun them, “so that [they] may be ashamed.” Future realities of predictive prophecy do not relieve us of our present responsibilities and relationships.

Peter called the church to “earnestly long for” “expectantly hasten” or “anticipate and help to speed up” (various translations) the coming day of God. A footnote to 2 Peter 3:12 in The Passion Translation (TPT) suggests the passage implies that “the church has the ability to speed up (and, by

implication, slow down) the coming of the day of God.”

Paul’s instruction to Pastor Titus on the island of Crete calls the future appearing of Jesus Christ, in the glory of His Second Coming, our “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13b, MEV). He then admonishes the young pastor to “teach these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you” (Titus 2:15).

In light of Paul’s pastoral admonitions, Pastor Jack Hayford offers a three-point-teaching of his own, for these days:

1. Live for the Moment ... redeeming the time: Ephesians 5:15-16; Philippians 1:21, 3:14, 4:13.
2. Keep Interceding ... praying in the Spirit: Luke 18:1, Romans 8:27, Ephesians 6:18.
3. Build for the Future ... doing business 'til He comes: Matthew 24:45-46, 2 Peter 3:12.

Jesus carefully taught His disciples about future prophetic events and promises. So did His apostles Paul, Peter, James and John, along with Gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke.

If modern pastoral expositors are to faithfully follow their examples—rather than avoid them—they must study, understand and proclaim the eschatological events, which are yet to come, while teaching and practicing personal holiness (2 Pet. 3:1-18).

“Even so, come Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20b). {eoa}

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