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## God's Plans for the Future

This book is about God's endgame, or the biblical future. This is often referred to as "eschatology," or the study of end times. Many Christians associate the study of end times with interpreting the sensational events happening in the Middle East. But eschatology is an important subject because it is a biblical theology of the future and helps us understand God's plan of redemption.

The subject, however, can be controversial and divisive, and many pastors simply avoid the topic and teach that it will all just work out in the end. They prefer to focus their preaching on spiritual formation and how Christians should live today. Indeed, the Bible has plenty to say about how we should think and behave in everyday life. But as Christ said, we need to worship God in spirit and truth.

Most important, Christ and the apostles focus a great deal of their teachings on our future resurrection on Judgment Day, when we escape God's wrath and inherit the kingdom of heaven, which should greatly impact how we live today. Therefore, to live properly today, we need to understand God's plans for tomorrow.

The Bible is about what God has done in the past, is doing today, and *will do in the future*. As such, the study of God's plans for the future is an essential component of a Christian education so that we can develop a mature faith in God. In fact, faith in Christ requires that we have a good understanding of the biblical future in order to look

forward to what God has in store for us: “Now faith is being sure of *what we hope for* and certain of what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1 NIV).

Unfortunately, conservative evangelical theologians, though in agreement on many core doctrines, have not been able to reach a consensus on eschatology. The different views are complex, confusing, and sometimes contradictory. The debate is often argumentative and contentious.

Some seminaries that advocate a particular eschatology will only seek faculty who adhere to and will teach the view they advocate. If professors shift their view, they are asked to leave. And although everyone wants a cordial discussion of the issues, most of the books written on the subject are hard-hitting rebuttals of the competing views. A great deal of biblical truth rides on the subject, so it necessitates a strong critique.

Evangelical theologians agree that Jesus of Nazareth is the Jewish Messiah who came into this world in the first century as the suffering servant to die for our sins and rescue us from God's wrath, reconcile us to God, and give us eternal life. But these theologians have never been able to reach a consensus on

- whether the Great Tribulation has already taken place or is a future event during the reign of the Antichrist,
- what transpires at Christ's second coming, or
- the meaning of the millennium as described by John in the book of Revelation, chapter 20.

As a result, many young Christians who want to be faithful to God's Word do not know what to hope for.

### **The Three Views on God's Endgame**

Evangelical theologians are divided into three main camps, and there are many variations within each camp.

**Amillennialists** believe Christ is already ruling as King over his saints and that the millennium currently exists in the celestial or spiritual realm of heaven. When Christ comes again on Judgment Day to destroy (or purify) this Genesis earth, he will then rapture the saints and take them to the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven. Thus, there

is no literal future paradise on this earth when Satan is totally removed from this world. The world remains in an evil age until the last day.

**Postmillennialists** also believe Christ returns on the last day to take us to heaven. But they believe that before Christ comes again to usher in the eternal kingdom, the church will evangelize and Christianize the nations. This will usher in a golden age of righteous humanity that may or may not last for a thousand years. Nations like North Korea and Iran will be led by Christian rulers, with their citizens living a Christian life of peace and righteousness. But Satan is not completely removed from this world.

**Premillennialists** believe Christ literally returns to this earth to establish a 1,000-year messianic kingdom before the saints inherit the Father's eternal kingdom. Satan is totally removed from this world, and the earth is restored to its Edenic condition of paradise. To inherit this millennial paradise, the saints are raptured either before the Tribulation, at the middle of the Tribulation, or at the end of the Tribulation. But all the raptured saints join Christ when he returns to this earth to establish his millennial kingdom.

The names themselves help identify these views.

- **A-millennialism:** *no* literal 1,000-year messianic kingdom before the eternal kingdom
- **Post-millennialism:** Christ returns *after* the thousand years of Christian civilization
- **Pre-millennialism:** Christ returns *before* a literal millennium to usher in his messianic kingdom

If you are new to the subject of eschatology and this information seems confusing and complicated, that is because it is. And believe it or not, this controversy over the millennium goes all the way back to the early church. But stay with me, and it will begin to make sense.

## The Nature of Heaven

Theologians also do not agree on the nature of heaven. Some believe the Genesis earth will be annihilated on the last day of this age and will be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth as our eternal home. Others believe the earth is only purged by fire and remains the current planet, though totally renewed and restored to its Edenic con-

dition. They believe Christ and his Father will come to dwell with the immortal saints on the renewed earth for eternity.

In this book I take the position that the earth will be destroyed on the last day. It will then be replaced with new heavens and a new earth. Just as Christ left his Father in heaven and came to dwell with us on this Genesis earth, one day he will take us to dwell with him and with his Father in his home on the eternal new earth. Throughout this book, the new heavens and new earth will also be referred to as the Father's kingdom of heaven, or simply, heaven. Heaven is the eternal home of the triune God where the raptured children of God will have eternal bodies and dwell with God forever in his eternal paradise. The saints are heirs of God himself in his eternal home.

### **A Biblical Theology of the Future**

The purpose of this book is to take the strengths from each of the current views on the millennium and integrate them into an alternative understanding of the biblical future. Hopefully, this approach can help resolve the confusion that surrounds this subject. Then we can be certain of what we hope for.

We must be careful not to have a completely open mind. As Christians, our beliefs and way of life are bound by the Scriptures and should conform to them. We are also indebted to the historical teachings of wise and godly men throughout the history of the church, and we should be skeptical of any new doctrine.

But as the Reformation has taught us, we should have an open *biblical* mind. We should also evaluate any old, new, or modified doctrine based on its conformity to the Scriptures. For example, the Reformers did a good job of going back to the Scriptures and correcting the Catholic Church's flawed views on salvation (known as *soteriology*). But Calvin and the Reformers did not question the Catholic Church's doctrines on eschatology, which, after Saint Augustine, had become postmillennial.

And very little progress has been made on the subject during the last five hundred years; although premillennialism, which goes back to the early church, did experience a major revival in the late 1800s and is quite popular today. But premillennialists have been unable to persuade many Reformed brothers to accept their view, and the majority remain amillennial.

Books continue to be published on the subject, but each camp has been unable to persuade the others that their view is the correct biblical doctrine. Even after almost two thousand years of church history, the subject remains in a state of confusion and chaos. This is truly unfortunate, and it is a great disservice to all people—Christians and non-Christians alike—who are seeking to understand God's plans for the future. Something must be partially wrong with each of the current views on eschatology.

God is not the author of confusion. Thus, the confusing subject of eschatology is long overdue for a serious biblical analysis, reevaluation, correction, and reformulation. It is time for a reformation in the field of eschatology itself. So, I began an extensive study of eschatology and read numerous books by scholars from the different camps to better understand their biblical justification for their views. I had not settled on any one view, so I could make an honest assessment of all the views to see how well they conformed to the Scriptures and how rational and coherent they were.

I came away from this in-depth study deeply disappointed. As scholars constructed their respective views on eschatology from the biblical evidence, some Scriptures fit their overall framework quite well. But I also found that some Scriptures were distorted to force them to fit, which I found quite disturbing. I concluded that there were major design and structural flaws in all these views on eschatology, just as in a poorly designed and constructed house. I did not know the answer, but I knew something was not quite right with the prevailing views.

### **House of Ideas**

In college, I studied architecture for several years before changing my major to history. I remember my professor of intellectual history saying that an ideology or worldview was like a house of ideas. People start with a basic set of ideas, which are then used to design and construct an entire ideology or philosophy of life. This ideology, in turn, can have either a positive or negative influence on a culture and civilization. For example, we studied the positive impact of the Puritan ideology on American society and government. The idea of a constitutional republic that guaranteed certain inalienable human rights and free enterprise grew out of the Puritan ideology.

We also studied the impact of Darwin's flawed ideas on evolution and natural selection on the Western world. During the Great Depression, for example, Germany experienced runaway inflation, which greatly destabilized the country. As the Nazis came to power during this period of turmoil, Hitler and his supporters developed a worldview that the Aryan race in Germany was a superior evolution of mankind. Influenced by this "survival of the fittest" principle, they believed that as the master race, it was their duty to rule over inferior nations and races and to prevent inferior races from contaminating the Aryan gene pool. They even decided that some inferior races or groups, such as the Jews, should be eliminated. Dump this ideology of a master race onto a disgruntled and industrious German people who had lost their Christian heritage, and you have a recipe for aggression, war, and genocide. Bad ideas and beliefs do have negative consequences. That is why the subject is called *intellectual* history. It is not just a history of dates and events. It is also the history of the ideologies that lead up to and cause historical events. Intellectuals and professors influence their students, who often become leaders. These leaders then build a house that we all must live in!

### Flawed House Designs

I will never forget my college professor's metaphor of the house of ideas. Given my background in architecture and intellectual history, when I began reading and analyzing the various books on eschatology, I discovered some faulty house designs, with serious structural flaws in all the current views.

**The Amillennial House:** Amillennialists believe Satan is never totally removed from this world, and there is no literal 1,000-year age of righteous humanity. But they have a Messiah without his messianic kingdom, which seems like a contradiction in terms. They understand that Christ is capable of binding Satan so that he can save his elect from Satan's dominion of darkness. But is Christ not also capable of completely removing Satan from this world so that he can rule the world with absolute justice?

**The Postmillennial House:** Postmillennialists believe we can create a golden age of righteous humanity on this earth for a thousand years if we simply evangelize and Christianize the world. They admit,

however, that Satan is not completely bound today and that he remains operational in this world until the last day. Do these theologians honestly believe we can create an age of righteous humanity while Satan remains operational in the world, influencing people to cheat, steal, and kill?

**The Premillennial House:** Premillennialists believe Christ returns to this earth with the raptured saints to establish his millennial kingdom. But what are the glorified sons of God doing on this earth comingling with natural human beings who survive the Great Tribulation? Don't the transformed children of God belong in heaven? And doesn't Peter teach that when Christ returns to take us to the imperishable kingdom of heaven, the earth is then destroyed (2 Peter 3:7–10)? How can Christ return to this earth if he destroys it when he returns?

I also discovered that each view has its strengths.

- **Amillennialists** make a good case that Christ comes again on the last day of this Genesis creation. He is the Alpha, the Omega, and judge of all mankind, after all.
- **Postmillennialists** make a good case that if Christ does rule the world for a thousand years, he can do so from his throne in heaven. He is God, after all.
- **Premillennialists** make a good case that there must be a 1,000-year messianic kingdom on this earth before we go to heaven. Jesus is the Messiah, after all.

Frustrated with the design flaws of these various views on God's endgame, I began to study the Scriptures in earnest, searching for an alternative design or structure that would make sense out of *all the relevant biblical data, from Genesis to Revelation*. I was not out to change the world; I just wanted to know the truth. And I believe that my background in architecture, as well as in intellectual history, not only helped me discern the design flaws in the current views, but it also enabled me to come up with a better framework for understanding God's endgame.

## Endgame in Chess

When I began writing a book on the subject, a friend of mine who worked in strategic planning for the military suggested that I title it

*God's Endgame.* The term *endgame* comes from the game of chess, which is a game of war. It is used to describe the final stages of one's strategy to bring the game of war to a conclusive victory. Sometimes a king is held in "check," but since he has a means of escape, he can live on for another day. Only after a succession of strategic moves toward the end when he is held in "checkmate" is he without a means of escape, and he is destroyed and the game is over.

I thought my friend's suggestion was a great name for the book. Like a game of chess, the Bible reveals God's strategy for redeeming his people and defeating Satan and his demons. The garden of Eden was God's kingdom on this earth. But after the fall, Satan and his demons entered this world, and there has been spiritual warfare ever since. Premillennialists believe Satan will be held in "check" during the millennium, and the world will be under God's renewed Lordship. Amillennialists believe Satan remains the ruler of this world until he is held in "checkmate" on the last day of this evil age, when he is destroyed in the lake of fire.

## The Rules of the Game

In the game of chess, there are rules that determine how the game should be played by the various pieces, such as bishops, rooks, knights, and pawns. When it comes to the process of understanding God's endgame, there are also rules of the game that students of the Bible should follow. Theologians call these rules "biblical hermeneutics." These are the principles of interpreting and organizing the Scriptures that should be followed when developing a proper view of God's plan of redemption.

For example, God's covenants with Abraham, Moses, and King David are guiding principles that determine how God will use Israel to one day crush Satan and bring about the redemption of mankind and this world. Through these covenants, God will use Israel to accomplish two very important missions: (1) to bring the Messiah into this world as the son of David, and (2) to usher in his messianic kingdom on this earth.

The Messiah was born of a Jew in Bethlehem of Judea, so Israel accomplished its first mission. But Israel rejected its own Messiah, and now theologians cannot agree on whether the remaining covenant with Israel to usher in the messianic kingdom is unconditional or conditional.

Premillennialists argue that the rules of the game have not changed and that Israel remains a strategic part of God's endgame. One day in the future, the Jews will indeed repent and believe in their own Messiah, just as many Gentiles have. They will again play a strategic role in God's endgame when Christ uses the nation of Israel to establish his messianic kingdom on this earth. In fact, all nations will want to go to Jerusalem with gifts to show their appreciation for the global peace and prosperity that the Jewish nation's Messiah has brought to the world.

Amillennialists, on the other hand, believe the rules of the game have changed. They assert that Israel's mission has been terminated because of their hard hearts and disobedience. Christ is now the new Israel. And even his mission has changed. Instead of ushering in the Jewish-led messianic kingdom when he returns, Christ's mission is to usher in the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven for all believers, Jew and Gentile. Thus, there is no future messianic kingdom on this earth.

Because of these two different interpretations of God's covenants with Israel, theologians cannot agree on the rules of the game. Examining these covenants has proven insufficient in helping to make the case for any particular eschatology.

But I believe the Bible itself reveals another set of rules as to how the game should be played that should get us beyond this impasse. When reading the Old Testament, I observed that the messianic kingdom is described by the prophets as a restoration of the Genesis creation to its Edenic condition. The wolf and the lamb graze together on a peaceful and prosperous earth. It is described as a kingdom where men and women marry, bear children, and experience an abundant life in a restored earthly paradise. The messianic kingdom is a restoration of our humanity as it was intended in the beginning before the fall. It is a restoration of the Adamic creation, or what I refer to as the Adamic order of being.

I further observed that the God of the Bible is a triune God and that within the Trinity this Genesis creation was uniquely created by, through, and for the Son of God. Christ was our Creator, who spoke this creation into existence. Before the fall, the garden of Eden was the Son's righteous kingdom. As such, he is the true Lord over all mankind. But when Satan came into this world, there was a regime change. The Son's dominion over righteous humanity became Satan's dominion of evil and darkness over unrighteous humanity.

When the Son of God came into this world to save us from Satan's dominion of darkness, he came as the son of David. Consequently, Jesus Christ was both the human Jewish Messiah *and* the incarnate Son of God. As the son of David, he had the right to rule over the nation of Israel. But as the Son of God, he has a divine right to rule over all the nations, for the whole Genesis creation rightly belongs to him.

Therefore, the 1,000-year messianic kingdom would simply be the Son's Genesis creation restored to him. It was his kingdom to begin with. In fact, God the Father has made an unconditional covenant with his eternal Son that one day he will remove all his enemies and restore this Genesis creation to him. Christ reveals this Trinitarian covenant between the Father and the Son when quoting from Psalm 110:

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord [God the Father] said to my Lord [God the Son], "Sit at my right hand [on his divine throne in heaven], until I [the Father] put your enemies under your feet"?' (Matt. 22:41–44)

After Christ ascended to his Father's right hand in heaven, he was given dominion over the world. As the Son of God, he has all the divine authority and power necessary to rule the world, but he is waiting on the Father to determine when his reign will begin. And the Father has promised his Son that one day he will rule over Israel *and* the whole world as King of kings and Lord of lords:

"As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill [the kingdom starts in Israel]." I will tell of the decree: The LORD [the Father] said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and *I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession* [the kingdom extended throughout the world]." (Ps. 2:6–8)

All the nations of the world belong to Jesus Christ because, as the Son of God, he is the Creator of all mankind.

Amillennialists can argue that God's covenant with Israel was conditional based upon the nation receiving its Messiah. But this is an *unconditional* covenant between God the Father and God the Son. That is because Christ was always faithful to his Father, both as a human being and surely as the Son of God. When the Son ascended to heaven, he sat down at the Father's right hand. And one day the Father will remove all his enemies on this earth, demonic and human, and the Son will get his Genesis creation back. Then he will rule the world. God's plan of redemption includes a restoration of our humanity.

But in the New Testament, I also discovered that Christ introduced a new perspective on God's plan of redemption, which is also structured around the Trinity. The followers of Christ not only become men and women of God destined to inherit the restored Edenic earth during his messianic kingdom, but they also become born-again children of God the Father destined to inherit the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven. The followers of Christ become sons of God the Father, modeled after his Sonship. In the Father's imperishable kingdom, his children will no longer experience marriage and procreation. They will be a new creation that is neither male nor female. Jesus even taught us to address God as "Abba, Father," as he did, which is not how Adam, as a man of God, would have addressed his Creator.

The Son's messianic kingdom is described by the prophets as a restoration of our humanity, with marriage and reproduction on a restored Edenic earth. But the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven will not be a restoration of our humanity; otherwise, there would be marriage in heaven. In heaven, we will continue to be embodied creatures in a real place, but we will have immortal bodies that, like the angels, will not experience marriage. In an extraordinary revelation, Jesus taught:

The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage [the Adamic order of being in this Genesis age], but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age [followers of Christ] and to the resurrection from the dead [in the eternal age to come] neither marry nor are given in marriage [the Adamic order of being as male and female comes to an end], for they cannot die anymore [an immortal body], because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection [the new creation as eternal sons of God]. (Luke 20:34–36)

Christ and the apostles defined eternal life for the sons of God as an eternal, embodied life that is neither male nor female on an eternal new earth living in eternal fellowship with the triune God. And as fellow children of God, we will experience a new kind of companionship in heaven. In fact, *none* of the following forms of human companionship based on our human sexuality will exist in heaven:

- husband or wife
- father or mother
- son or daughter
- brother or sister
- grandfather or grandmother
- uncle or aunt
- nephew or niece, and so forth

These human relationships are all part of the human experience. When we are born again and become Christians, we become restored men and women of God in the Adamic order of being. My wife is my female companion in marriage, whom I am to love and serve. But in the new creation, my wife is also a fellow child of God in which there is neither male nor female. In heaven, she will no longer be my wife, and I will experience a new kind of companionship with her as a fellow child of God.

Theologians have done a poor job of integrating this revelation by Christ pertaining to the immortal bodies of the sons of God into their eschatology. I have read numerous books on the subject of God's plans for the future, but I do not recall any author taking this revelation seriously. Many ignore these Scriptures altogether. But understanding the two creations is critical to understanding God's plan of redemption.

As I studied the Bible, I observed that God's plan of redemption is designed and structured around these two kingdoms of the triune God and their corresponding creations:

- ***The Adamic creation*** as male and female is destined for the Son's restored earth for a restored humanity for a thousand years.
- ***The new creation*** as immortal sons of God is destined for the Father's heavenly kingdom on the eternal new earth.

The millennium is the Son's kingdom restored, and the new heavens and new earth is the Father's eternal kingdom.

According to the prophets, in the Son's messianic kingdom the people of God will continue to function as male and female in the image of God. Men and women will become one flesh, reproduce sons and daughters, and fill and subdue a restored Edenic earth with their offspring. The millennium will include a human society and civilization as it was intended to be in the beginning before the fall. But according to Christ and the apostles, when this Genesis earth perishes and we are taken to the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven, the eternal sons of God will no longer experience the Adamic functions of marriage and reproduction. And we will experience a new form of companionship as fellow children of God.

This is a Trinitarian eschatology. And these are the rules of the game that theologians should follow when constructing their version of God's endgame. In effect, these are the building codes as to how the house of ideas revealed in the Scriptures should be constructed.

When I embarked on a study of this subject, I began to use these principles of interpretation as design guidelines to organize the various biblical components into a well-constructed biblical theology of the future. For example, when I'm reading Isaiah and he describes a restored humanity with men and women experiencing marriage on a restored earthly paradise with a wolf living in peace with a lamb, then it obviously pertains to the Son's 1,000-year restoration of this Genesis creation.

Or, if I'm reading Paul's letter to the Philippians, and he describes our transformed immortal bodies inheriting our citizenship in heaven when Christ returns to take us to join him there, then it pertains to the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven. This method is an elegantly simple way to study the Scriptures in order to understand God's endgame.

## **Different Operating Systems**

Jesus often used agrarian-based parables to help us understand the kingdom of God. Christ is portrayed as a planter, gardener, and reaper, and we are portrayed as his field, crop, and harvest. Most of us no longer live in an agrarian society, so to use an analogy from the modern age of computers, God's plan of redemption revolves around

two very different computer operating systems. The operating system of the Son's 1,000-year restoration of this creation could be described as a reboot of the original computer with the corrupted operating system and software repaired. Satan, who hacked into the system and introduced malicious viruses and malware, would be removed and prevented from corrupting the system during Christ's reign. In contrast, the operating system of the Father's new creation could be described as a new computer with a very different operating system and software. This flawless system would operate forever without any interference, corruption, or breakdown.

I found that many of the mistakes made by theologians in describing God's endgame were the result of confusing these two operating systems. Since amillennialists do not believe in a future millennium, they sometimes impose the prophecies in Isaiah describing the Son's restored Genesis creation onto the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven, so that heaven is essentially a restored humanity on a restored Genesis earth. But how can heaven be a restored humanity if we will not experience marriage and reproduction? Marriage and procreation are fundamental to all the forms of human companionship that we experience on this earth. Being male and female gets to the very essence of our existence.

Premillennialists, on the other hand, make the mistake of having the raptured, glorified sons of God who no longer experience marriage coming back to the Son's restored natural earth during the millennium to live alongside human beings who continue to experience marriage. But this is another obvious design flaw. The eternal sons of God belong on the Father's eternal new earth—not on the Son's restored earth.

### **A Real Geopolitical Threat**

The apostle Paul emphasized the eternal kingdom of heaven. And some amillennial theologians construe this lack of emphasis on Christ's earthly kingdom as an indication that God's plan of redemption no longer includes a restoration of this Genesis creation before the eternal kingdom.

But it is important to remember that Paul was a Jewish evangelist to the Gentiles operating in the hostile pagan Roman Empire. His main objective was to get the pagan Gentiles to believe in Christ so that they

could inherit eternal life in the Father's kingdom of heaven. He knew these Gentile converts would be persecuted by the Roman authorities if they no longer worshiped the emperor or the pagan Roman gods. But he also knew that if his gospel message had included a clear vision of the earthly reign of Christ, it would have been perceived by the Roman authorities as a geopolitical threat to their empire, and they would needlessly be persecuted even more.

During the Roman Empire, all roads led to Rome, with soldiers bringing the spoils of war from other nations to enrich their great empire. But the Jewish prophets also foretold a Jewish Messiah who would destroy all the unrighteous kingdoms of sinful man and set up his messianic kingdom as a global empire. Then, they taught, instead of all roads leading to a pagan empire, all roads would lead to Jerusalem. The nations would bring gifts to Israel as a show of gratitude for the peace and prosperity the Jewish Messiah had brought to the world. King Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the Roman authorities were aware of these teachings, which is why they were paranoid of any Jew claiming to be the Messiah.

If Paul had articulated a clear message of Christ's future reign, the Romans would have no doubt set out to destroy the young church at the embryonic stage of its growth. Paul and the disciples were wise not to emphasize the earthly reign of Christ. When the Gentile Christians were persecuted for their faith in Christ, Paul taught them to remain focused on Christ's second coming, when their natural bodies would be transformed into eternal bodies and they would inherit their citizenship in heaven. Upon investigating these strange teachings, the Roman authorities might have thought Paul was out of his mind, but they would not have considered his gospel of a heavenly kingdom that is not of this world a real geopolitical threat.

This strategy helps explain the stealthy book of Revelation. It delivers the truth about the future millennial reign of Christ, cleverly hidden in a form of literature that made it almost impossible for the Romans to comprehend. If they had obtained a copy of the book, after reading a few chapters, they would have likely thrown it down in utter exasperation!

Even today theologians struggle to understand Revelation. But understanding Revelation is critical to understanding God's end-game. Revelation reveals that the saints will experience two resur-

rections: one at the beginning of the millennium, so they can inherit the Son's restored Genesis earth for a thousand years; and another at the end of the millennium when the earth perishes on Judgment Day, so they can inherit the Father's new heavens and new earth for eternity. Understanding the nature of these two resurrections and where Christ is when he rules the world are essential to understanding God's endgame.

### Postrestorationism

There are five key questions that need to be answered correctly to understand God's endgame:

1. What is the nature of the millennial reign of Christ?
2. Where is Christ if, and when, he rules the world?
3. What is the nature of the first resurrection at the beginning of the millennium?
4. What is the nature of the final or general resurrection after the millennium on the last day of this Genesis age?
5. When does Christ return?

In this book, I will make the biblical case that the millennium will be a restored Edenic paradise for a restored humanity. This occurs when Christ removes Satan, removes the curse, and reclaims his wonderful creation. But instead of Christ returning to this earth to establish his millennial kingdom, I will make the case that he rules the world from his throne in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. Since the beginning of the millennium is not his second coming, the first resurrection cannot be the rapture of the saints. Therefore, the first resurrection must be of the natural, Adamic bodies of the departed saints so they can inherit the Son's restored Edenic earth—restored natural bodies for a restored natural earth. Christ returns *after* the millennium at the final resurrection on Judgment Day to usher in the Father's eternal kingdom of heaven. The sons of God are then raptured into eternal bodies so they can inherit the Father's eternal new heavens and new earth—eternal bodies for an eternal kingdom. At the same time, unbelievers are resurrected from hades and sent to the lake of fire. Christ returns *after* (post-) a literal 1,000-year restoration of this Genesis creation. Thus, the name *postrestorationism*.

Surprisingly, this view of God's endgame has never been considered. It is, however, very close to that of the early church millennialists. It is a modified form of historic millennialism. Some of the early church fathers in the first century knew John when he wrote the book of Revelation. They could ask John personally for his interpretation of the two resurrections. These church fathers claim that John and the apostles taught that the first resurrection will be of the natural bodies of the departed saints, similar to the resurrection of Lazarus, and that the final resurrection will be of the raptured, eternal bodies of the sons of God, as described by Jesus. Chapters 21–24 in this book are devoted to the important teachings of the early church millennialists. But most important, I will make a biblical case for this view of God's endgame.

### Summary

The subject of eschatology is often considered as an esoteric topic. Pastors and theologians remain focused on a gospel message centered on sinful mankind's reconciliation with a holy God, redemption in this life, escaping God's wrath on Judgment Day, and eternal life in heaven. But understanding God's plans to restore mankind to an Edenic paradise during Christ's millennial reign before we are taken to heaven helps us grasp God's great love for sinful mankind, which is why the subject is so important to properly understand.

Unfortunately, theologians have offered different views on God's plan of redemption. But I will make the biblical case for postrestorationism.

- During the millennium, Christ rules the restored Edenic earth *from his throne in heaven*.
- The *first resurrection* will be of the natural bodies of the departed saints because they are destined to inherit the Son's restored Genesis earth—natural human bodies for a restored natural earth.
- Christ returns *after the millennium* on the last day of this Genesis creation to usher in the eternal age to come.
- The *final resurrection* will be of the raptured, immortal bodies of the sons of God because they are destined to inherit the Father's kingdom of heaven—eternal bodies for an eternal kingdom.