

XXXVIII. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

*What Does the Bible Say?*

“Developing the Christian Mind, Part 8—The Consummation”

Revelation 21:1–8

Dr. Harry L. Reeder III

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A Baptist friend of mine said you can know who loves the church by who comes on Sunday morning, you can know who loves the preacher by who comes on Sunday night, and you can know who loves Jesus by who comes to prayer meeting on Wednesday nights. I thought that was a pretty good insight and with that in mind I simply want to say ‘I love you too.’ I will be doing a little bit of a review but I want to get to this fifth essential in developing a Christian mind for Christ. We kick this off with the words of our Savior as He rebukes one of His precious own and that is Peter. He had just given a commendation to Peter that was gloriously stirringly powerful.

Matthew 16:15–19 says [15] *He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”* [16] *Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* [17] *And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.* [18] *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Then He communicates to Peter the foundation of this prevailing church that hell will assault but will triumph.)* [19] *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*

Jesus then tells them He will go to the cross, be crucified and then be raised on the third day. Then Peter shortly after what he just said actually pronounces a malediction upon the eternal plan of God. Matthew 16:22–23 says [22] *And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.”* (It is right then that an unbeliever goes into league with Satan and you know that because of what Jesus says next.) [23] *But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”*

So instead of Peter thinking right in which he had just done with a transformed mind by the power of the Spirit from the Father, he is now thinking wrong. There are basically two world and life views which come from the latter part of Matthew 16:23 – man’s or God’s. Some of my favorite books are (The God who) He is There and He is not Silent by Francis A. Schaefer and Lifeviews by R.C. Sproul. These books are helpful but here is the short cut for the two life views. It is either the sovereign self (man’s interests) or the sovereign God (God’s interest). Now there are varieties of –isms and iterations of the sovereign self (i.e. materialism, narcissism, consumerism etc.) but they all come back to the sovereign self where it is all about me. It is where I will interpret, identify and define life from my perspective as if I am god. Professing to be wise they become fools.

We want a Triune God-centered world and life view. You don’t get this when you get saved. Here is what you get when you get saved. You get a new heart for you are born again. You get a new record for you are justified. You get a new family for you have been adopted into the family of God. You get a new perspective for you have been called from death unto life. You get a new life and a new home but you do not get a new mind. You did get a call and the utensils – the Spirit of God and the Word of God – to obey the call of the Holy Spirit. Romans

12:2 says [2] *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

How do you get a transformed life? You get a transformed life by the renewing of your mind. Therefore we went with this simple statement that your life view will determine your life style as it is fueled by your life love. To live a faithful and effective Christian life style, a Christian must develop a Christ-centered, Bible-framed, Spirit-filled life view (mind) propelled by a Christ-consumed life love saturated by persistent prayer. The love of Christ constrains you. Your life love leads you to the life view that results in a life style, and that is what God is doing in your life.

A world and life view answers four questions. One is why is there something rather than nothing? As I was doing research on a prominent atheist this is how he answered how you get something out of nothing; there was a probe from an alien life style that was planted and created this. Here is something that makes much more sense than that. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It is amazing the amount of sophisticated imbecility that we will embrace in order to deny the reality of God. It is not an intellectual issue. We suppress the truth in unrighteousness. It is a heart issue. When God changes your heart then you can develop this Christian life view because you now have this life love and that's how we get the life style.

Many of us are trying to piece meal our Christian life. It's where we look at other Christians and think Christians do this or that and that's fine to pick up from other believers best practices for the Christian life for we need models/mentors for life but a consistent Christian life comes from developing a Christian mind. So that we think Biblically in order to live Biblically and ultimately behavior will reveal what you really believe particularly under adversity. If you want to know what truths have been embraced by someone see how they respond in days of adversity because what people really believe will be manifested at that moment.

So here are the four questions. Why is there something rather than nothing? Why are some things right and some things wrong? What things are right and what things are wrong? Who or what will determine the things that are right and things that are wrong? People are going to believe something is right and something is wrong but the question is who will determine what is right and wrong. Narcissism never succeeds. No one ever lives as if they are the final statement of what is right and wrong. There is always someone to fill the gap and historically and Biblically we are warned.

Statism is what fills the gap. I just listened today with great intentionality about statism. The government is telling my home state that they will determine who goes to what bathroom – what's right and what's wrong and it's wrong for you to insist on gender modesty and privacy. That is now wrong and if you don't bow we'll take all of our money from you, says the government to the state of North Carolina. That is called statism. Statism flourishes whenever people deny the sovereign crown rights of God. It will volunteer and proclaim itself the deliverer, the messiah, the truth giver and the one who determines what is right and wrong.

That is where ultimately you have to make a decision in your life. Who says ultimately and authoritatively what is right and what is wrong? A believer answers that by saying God is the One who determines that. How do you know what is right and wrong? That is why we become people of the Book because here is the way God reveals who He is and what is true. Thy Word is truth. Our desire is that the same Spirit who gave the Word will be in us to give us this world and life view and then we can not only answer the four framing questions but we can answer the four personal questions.

The personal questions are who am I and as a believer I am made in the image of God. The second question is where did I come from? I came from the power of God who formed me in my mother's womb, knit me together and numbered my days for me. Thirdly, is why am I here? My Creator made me, my Savior saved me and God sustains me that I might glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. Fourthly, where am I going? This is the consummation and that is what we will be addressing in this study. Where am I headed?

So the essential framework of a Christian world and life view has five essential layers. The essential of all essentials is the doctrine of creation. If you get that one wrong you get everything wrong. That is why the Creator and the creation are constantly under attack. If you believe there is a God who spoke into existence all that exists today you can't hardly get a position anywhere in any academic enterprise and it's not that you lose the debate on this but it's that they won't even let you enter the debate. Who made you is so essential and that's why when Paul went before the Athenians he didn't start with the cross but he started with creation to get to the cross to tell them why the cross was meaningful in Acts 17.

The second essential is you go from creation to the fall. If God made all things good by the Word of His power then how did everything go wrong? Then we understand actual sin as it came from original sin. If everything is wrong then how can I be made right? That is dealt with in the third essential of redemption. It is how we are saved by grace and no one is so lost or far away that they can't be saved. God's grace is greater than all our sin – the glorious, majestic work of the Gospel of grace through Jesus Christ our Lord and our Redeemer.

The fourth essential is the doctrine of God's providence. This had two pieces to it. On the one side is God's providential grace that He specially delivers to His people. Here is what He says to His people. Romans 8:28 says [28] *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* It is not that all things are good but all things work together for good. It is the tapestry of God's providence. The other side is that even God's providence blesses unbelievers. No one will ever stand before God and not be able to say 'I tasted of His goodness and grace' and we call this common grace. It is where the rain falls on the just and the unjust. They are given the opportunity to appreciate what is beautiful, true and right and are given the abilities to partake in the blessings of God that flow continually. God not only has special providence in redeeming grace but He has a general providence in common grace that all participate in. He gives all breath and days of living by His kindness and goodness toward them.

Having said that, I want to address the fifth essential of consummation from two texts of Scripture that deals with where everything is going. If Marxism or evolution is your world and life view you are a Hegelian dialectic. That's their view of life and the way everything exists. Hegel says you have thesis, an antithesis, they have a combative relationship and as they combat a new thesis is formed which is called a synthesis and this then creates another antithesis. Then you have another battle that creates another synthesis. Do you get the picture? Then Marx looked at it and believed it so now you have the bourgeois who are the people in power and have money and there is the proletariat who are the disenfranchised. They will go to war and this is called revolution. Out of that will come a new order, a synthesis, which becomes the new bourgeois and then will come another proletariat and that will go to war and this is where Marxism comes from. This is their view and how life is always in this downward spiral, until some final apocalyptic war destroys everything.

Darwin took the same thing and said there is a species (thesis), then a mutation (antithesis) and this blends where you get a new species which will have a mutation and that will

blend. So that is the way their life is developed which is the Darwin use of the Hegelian dialectic.

Then there are those that believe history is just circular but the believer says ‘no.’ There are circular aspects and we don’t deny that there are wars and how God works in microevolution but we believe there is a beginning and there is an end that is actually the everlasting beginning. We believe that everything is moving toward that and that there is meaning in everything that is occurring and that God is taking us to a final consummation of glory. What would that look like? Let’s start by looking at two passages of Scripture and then I will distill a couple of things from them. In this first passage we’ll see the coming of Christ.

Revelation 20:11–15 says [11] *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

In other words, when the Lord comes this present order, this heavens and earth, will be consumed. There is a Judgment Seat and all of humanity will appear before it. There are these books that contain the record of all of humanity, standing before the One who is righteous who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. Those who stand on their own record which are recorded in those books standing before Him, all will hear the verdict, ‘guilty’ and are thrown into the lake of fire but the redeemed are not in those books. The redeemed are in the book of life, the Lamb’s book, the One who paid the penalty for us so our sins have been removed. So there is no condemnation or charges that stand against us. We will enter into a new heavens and a new earth. There is eternal death in the lake of fire and there is eternal life in the new heavens and new earth. What will that look like? Let’s continue in Revelation 21.

Revelation 21:1–2 says [1] *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2] And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* When God first made man, Adam, He put him in a garden and then Adam fell into sin and his seed built a city which erected a tower where people said they would work their way to heaven. The sovereign self was revealed but praise the Lord there is a new Adam, another Adam who comes to go to a cross and is buried in a garden. He will take us to a new heavens and a new earth, filled not with a city of sin or rebellion, the city of man, but the city of God where He dwells forever and ever.

Revelation 21:3–8 says [3] *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. [4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*

[5] *And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”* Also he said, *“Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” [6] And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. [7] The one who conquers will have*

*this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. [8] But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”*

So you are either born twice and die once or you are born once and die twice. Here is life eternal and death eternal. This God has a place for us in the city of God in a new heavens and a new earth in which all of the sin is removed and the consequences of sin will never be encountered again. There will be no tears, no sickness, no death for all of that is removed. I'd like to look at one more passage before I distill a few thoughts from this.

II Peter 3:1–16a says [1] *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, [2] that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, [3] knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. [4] They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”* (If you're a believer you say 'wrong' here because we know what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, the flood, the cross, the resurrection. That world and life view we dismiss.) [5] *For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, [6] and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. [7] But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

[8] *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [9] The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

[11] *Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, [12] waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! [13] But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

[14] *Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. [15] And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, [16a] as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.*

Here is what he is saying. Jesus Christ is coming again. When He comes these heavens and earth will be melted with fire and there will roll out a new heavens and a new earth. There will be a judgment and the ungodly will be cast into the lake of fire. God's people will be welcomed into the presence of the Lord for all eternity. This promise has been around for thousands of years. Lord, why hasn't He come? People mock that and say 'where is His coming for nothing has changed at all. He hasn't come. Why hasn't He come?' Peter gives us the answer.

Why has Jesus not come? It is for one reason according to Peter. He hasn't come because all of the elect have not come to faith and repentance. II Peter 3:9 says [9] *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise* (of coming again) *as some count slowness* (Christ is slow with a

purpose not as some count as slowness for His slowness is actually patience), *but is patient toward you* (the people who the letter is written to), *not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*. Who is Peter writing to? II Peter 3:8 and 14 says he is writing to the beloved. II Peter 3:8 says [8] *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*. This is not a formula for God is telling us He is not governed by time for He governs time. God is eternal. That is what He is telling us.

So why hasn't He come in these succession of days that You have created? He hasn't come because He is patient toward His beloved. This isn't the first time Peter has written to the beloved. II Peter 3:1a says [1] *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved*. So what is the first letter? It's I Peter, the first letter he wrote to the beloved. I Peter 1:1 says [1] *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia...* We are the elect, sojourners, aliens, exiles, pilgrims and that is who he is writing to.

So the simple answer to why Jesus hasn't come is that He is patient. What is He patiently waiting for? It is His sovereign grace to save all of the elect. That is why Jesus said He wouldn't come again until the Gospel has been preached to all the nations. Why did He say that? It is because the elect are coming from every tribe and nation. So Jesus won't come back until He has secured the Gospel to all the nations and the power of the Holy Spirit taking that Gospel to gather all the elect in.

Then Peter says 'let's hasten the coming of the Lord.' I have the privilege to pastor a great church who is committed to hastening the coming of the Lord. That doesn't mean we change God's timetable. It means that Christ will come back when the Gospel has been preached to all the nations and all the elect have been converted. So how do you hasten the coming of the Lord? Get the Gospel to all the nations and share the Gospel will everyone you meet because someone somewhere is going to share the Gospel with someone somewhere who will be the last one who needs to know Christ. Boom He comes! When all the elect have been gathered in, then He comes in glory.

I want to give you five distillations of the consummation and how this affects us. The first thing this does to my Christian world and life view is reminds me of a woman's funeral where she had a Bible in one hand and a fork in the other. She said "When I die march everyone by my casket and tell everyone the Bible is in my left hand because it brought me to the Word of God and God has never failed me. Tell them the fork is in my right hand because when you have finished with a meal the hostess says 'save your fork' because you know the best is yet to come." That's what it is for every believer. I love Jesus and I'm so grateful Jesus loves me. As good as God has blessed me here in the midst of all the challenges, the best is yet to come. Not only will I be in a place where there is no sin or no consequences of sin but I won't even have the ability to sin. Me and my accountability team won't have to meet once a week to hold each other's hands because I will be like Him. So the first distillation is the best is yet to come.

Secondly, Christians ought to be the masters of embracing delayed gratification. In other words, if you bought a book titled Your Best Life Now, I will shoot you, unless you were doing research. You of all people ought to know your best life is not now. I can have a faithful life now but my best life is to come and I don't live as if I have to have my best life now. I may have to embrace suffering now or be called to die for Jesus now. I'm not going through life thinking it has to be all smiles and roses. No, I'm going through life knowing that I'm more than a conqueror with the joy of the Lord and not the happiness of happenstance. I want to go

through life giving thanks to God in all things because I know my Savior is working. We are the masters of delayed gratification.

Thirdly, we know the reality of heaven and hell and this ought to affect every time you come into contact with someone for these are immortal souls and they will have resurrected bodies. That body will either spend eternity in the unendurable yet actually endured hell or in the presence of the Lord in a new heavens and a new earth. God gives us that one message that can deliver them from the books to the book of Life, in His sovereign plan. There is a Judgment to come. Thankfully when I stand at that Judgment I won't be judged by what is in the books for I will hear 'enter in' because the Judgment as been taken from me and I'm in the book of Life. I praise God for that but I still have a stewardship job.

Every single one of you have a spiritual gift, a message that has been entrusted to you – the Word of God and the Gospel – and been entrusted to the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. Be a faithful steward. We have that talent judgment before us. Did I take the gift and bury it with laziness or indolence or because I didn't want to be bothered by being a servant? Or did I invest it where the one became two or the five became ten? Did God allow me to be a good steward? I will answer for what He has entrusted to me in that day and just as there are degrees of punishment in hell, there are rewards in heaven. Everyone in heaven will have perfect joy and blessing but some will receive the affirmation of the rewards, 'Well done good and faithful servant, enter in' and the Lord will affirm your ministry with those rewards of doing faithfully what He enabled you to do for Him.

Fourthly, in the consummation the new heavens and new earth declares the primacy of worship. Every time in the Bible they peeled back heaven and you get a glimpse of eternity, what are they doing? They are worshipping. Do not believe eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth is going to be sitting in a multi-billion year worship service. I believe you will work, play, have relationships, fellowships and all of those things in the perfections of Christ but the great joy we see in heaven, the unfallen angels are constantly worshipping Him, therefore I believe the priority of gathered worship is one of the best instruments, not only to affect life worship every day, but to prepare us for the age to come. It is God-centered worship.

Fifthly, there is one thing yet to be fulfilled as we have just heard, and it is the salvation of the elect from every tribe and nation. Please pray and embrace this. Pray that we at Briarwood would remain committed to and on mission for world missions and realize that one of the great unreached nations of today is our own country. I do not say that to diminish our commitment to world missions but I say that to remind you that we live in a rapidly secularized nation bent on vacuuming out anything that points to the majesty of Christ. You will be surrounded by it but so what? Christians have always been surrounded by it. Your God is greater. Now let's walk with the Gospel into our nation with Gospel evangelism and discipleship. Send it to the world and hasten the coming of the Lord. In a fresh new way commit yourself as I commit myself, to prayer and personal evangelism in a way that we've never done before, thanking God for all that has been done before. Ask God that we can take it to another level and to bring a harvest like you've never seen before in our land, another Gospel Awakening. I don't know what our part will be in it but I want a part of it. Let's do it together. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these basic, wonderful, glorious, absolutely mind stretching truths from Your Word. I pray Father that You would continue to help us think Biblically with a renewed

mind that our questions are answered from Your full authoritative Word and not the emptiness of man's philosophy. Thank You that life affirms its truth constantly. Father, I thank You for these who love You and now I ask that in their life love of Christ may a life view with the mind of Christ be increasingly embraced and a life style for Christ be gloriously manifested from faith to faith and victory to victory for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.