

Realized Eschatology

(The 70 AD Doctrine)

Introduction

1. **This morning's lesson will be an overview of a movement among churches of Christ that continues to grow and exert a divisive influence, and that is "Realized Eschatology" or the 70 AD doctrine.**
2. **Warnings:**
 - A. **The apostle Paul often warned brethren of coming problems in the church. To the Ephesian elders he said:**

Acts 20:29-30 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

- B. **One of the first issues the church had to face concerned the matter of circumcision. In the first century this was a serious matter because "certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1). Paul thought it was an important issue and in addressing this matter Paul concluded:**

Galatians 1:6-8 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

- B. **Truth and error cannot coexist. John said:**

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

What is Realized Eschatology?

1. **“Eschatology, or doctrine of last things, means the ideas entertained at any period on the future life, the end of the world (resurrection, judgment...) and the eternal destinies of mankind.”**

(International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, James Orr, II:972)

“Realized” signifies accomplishment.

- A. **Therefore, Realized Eschatology is a doctrine of completed last things. According to its interpretation of the Bible, the end times were realized and accomplished in 70 AD at the destruction of Jerusalem.**

What does this doctrine teach?

1. **The doctrine is extremely complex but the essence of this theory teaches that when the destruction of Jerusalem took place in September of 70 AD, all Bible prophecy was fulfilled at that time! This includes:**

- A. **The second coming of Christ (tonight’s lesson)**

- 1) **That all New Testament passages about the second coming of Christ have nothing to do with the actual return of Jesus for the saved. Instead, all the second-coming passages have to do with a spiritual (invisible) coming of Jesus in 70 AD.**

- B. **The resurrection of the Dead (Monday nights lesson)**

- 1) **The resurrection (which the New Testament has much to say), does not involve the physical body. Instead this doctrine says that the resurrection of the dead actually refers to a resurrection of the Christian system (or the church) from the persecution inflicted by the Jews between 30 AD and 70 AD.**

C. The Day of Judgment (Tuesday nights lesson)

- 1) **The judgment day is not a time in the future when all men and women will give an account to God for the deeds done in these bodies; instead this doctrine says that the judgment day is the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 AD.**

D. The End of the World (Tuesday nights lesson)

- 1) **The end of the world is not the passing away of the earth, but instead it means the dissolving of the Jewish world. This doctrine denies that Peter is discussing the actual end of the world in 2 Peter 3 when he writes in verse 10:**

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

- 2) **Those who believe in the 70 AD doctrine say that Peter is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish system and not the end of the literal world.**

E. The kingdom of Christ was not fully established until 70 AD.

- 1) **It teaches that even though the kingdom was born, or established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, it did not come with “power” and in its fullness until Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD.**

2. Let me emphasize, this doctrine teaches that all New Testament references to the following refer and apply to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

- A. Last Days:** “the last days, therefore, never apply to the Christian age, but always to the closing period of the Jewish age, which ran from Pentecost to the fall of Jerusalem” (SOP, P.79).

- B. **End of the World:** “The world marked for destruction in prophecy, the end of which involved the second coming of Christ, and resulted in the redemption of true Israel, was the Jewish world. Therefore, it is the end of the Jewish world, not this material earth...” (SOP, P. 83).
- C. **Day of Judgment:** “the world reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:7), was the Jewish world” (SOP, P. 131).
- D. **The second coming of Christ:** “the fall of Jerusalem was the last day, and therefore the second coming of Christ” (SOP, P. 150).

This Is Not A New Doctrine

1. The apostle Paul had to battle a form of this doctrine in his lifetime:

2 Timothy 2:16-18 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

- A. **Hymenaeus and Philetus believed and taught that the resurrection is already past. This is the cornerstone of the 70 AD doctrine.**
 - 1) **They teach that the resurrection occurred in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem. This doctrine, that the resurrection had already occurred was being taught before Jerusalem was even destroyed.**
 - A. **How did Paul view this belief? Did he say it was harmless? Did he suggest that churches, elders, and preachers just ignore these beliefs?**
 - B. **NO – he said these were “profane and idle babblings”, they will “increase to more ungodliness”. He said to believe the resurrection is already past is to “stray concerning the truth”. This doctrine would “overthrow the faith of some.”**

The Introduction to the 70 AD Doctrine

- 1. Those advancing the theory of Realized Eschatology believe that all prophecies pertaining to the Lord's second coming, the resurrection, judgment day, and the end of the world have all been fulfilled in the past, specifically in 70 AD at the destruction of Jerusalem.**
- 2. Insofar as this doctrine infecting churches of Christ, we must go directly to two men.**
 - A. C. D. Beagle and son-in-law Max R. King are the first to introduce this doctrine to our brethren at a preacher's meeting in Ohio on April 22, 1971.**
 - B. Max King soon became the leading proponent. King has written two books on this subject, *"The Spirit of Prophecy"* in 1971 (Republished in 2002), and a 784 page volume entitled *"The Cross and The Parousia of Christ"* in 1987.
 - 1) I have read *"The Spirit of Prophecy"* (1971 version) and throughout the course of this study I reference this book by using the abbreviation SOP with the page number.****
- 3. Max King's material relating to Realized Eschatology is a perversion of scripture and it disrupts and divides churches.**
 - A. The proponents of this doctrine realize that their notions are so unorthodox that their task to win converts is a formidable one at best.**
 - B. They are very critical of what they call "traditional views" of Bible teachings on the last things. They expect to stimulate interest by a "new view of the scriptures," or "a fresh approach."
 - 1) In the introduction of *"The Spirit of Prophecy"* book by Max King, C. D. Beagle writes *"To say that this book is controversial is putting it mildly..."*****

Point of Emphasis – Dates of New Testament Books

- 1. It is the contention of those who support the 70 AD doctrine that ALL the New Testament books were written prior to 70 AD.**
 - A. If any of the books of the New Testament were written after 70 AD and they mention the end of things yet to come, the theory under consideration would be proved false.**

- 2. Writers of New Testament books do not indicate in their books the precise date when they were composed. Internal and some external evidences can be helpful in arriving at the possible time of the writing of the books.**
 - A. It must be admitted by those who support the 70 AD doctrine as well as those who oppose it, that the precise dating ultimately comes down to one's opinion supported by whatever internal or external data one has at command to assist in the matter.**
 - 1) This being the case, it would indicate an arrogance on the part on anyone to base a position on the absolute certainty that EVERY book of the New Testament was written prior to 70 AD.**
 - 2) We must keep this in mind in the study of the dates of New Testament books which is critically important to the supporters of the 70 AD doctrine.**

- 3. There is much evidence, based on the work of many Bible scholars, that the following New Testament books were written after 70 AD:**
 - A. The Gospel of John (80 – 98 AD)**
 - B. 1, 2, 3 John (70 – 96 AD)**
 - C. Jude (70 – 90 AD)**
 - D. Revelation (80 – 96 AD)**
 - 1) Max King in his book *"The Spirit of Prophecy"* heaps chastisements on those who may disagree with him that any ONE book was written after 70 AD!**

