

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHING THE ESCHATOLOGICAL GOSPEL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Science and technology have placed global, instantaneous communication at one's fingertips, yet the spirit of humanity in this Postmodern Age is in constant turmoil and looking for a global solution to its age-old problem of peace (*shalom*) with God in the form of a quick-fix, cure-all answer. This remains fertile ground for Satan to sow his seeds of lies, deception and heresy, but also more importantly, for the Church to sow the seeds of faith, hope and love of the full Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of using the positive message of the "already-not yet" Eschatological Gospel of the kingdom of God, the Church (which is definitely in the Laodecian Church Period and relying more on "ministries" than on the local Church Body of Christ) has opted, for the most part, to use apocalypticism or "eschatomania" as a negative motivator to scare lost humanity into the kingdom.

Also in the infancy of this twenty-first century, the American Church specifically has received several clarion wake-up calls: the terrorist attack on America's east coast (New York and Washington, D.C.) of 9/11/01, Oral Roberts' vision of August 2004, the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in the summer of 2005, a prophetic word from Pat Robertson about possible "very serious terrorist attacks by evil men" and "chaos is going to rule" in the latter part of 2007 (Robertson January 2007), the unprecedented, rapidly increasing price of oil in 2008, and the economic downturn in the latter portion of 2008 and into 2009.

If the Church is to fight this vicious, onslaught from Satan (the enemy of its soul) and heed these clarion calls from God (especially as the Church sees the day of Jesus' *Parousia* approaching), then the Church must take advantage of the same high-tech tools to spread the Eschatological Gospel of the Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. This is presently being done to varying degrees/extents through the efforts of such organizations and venues as the following: 1)

Oral Roberts' Evangelistic Association, Golden Eagle Broadcasting, and Oral Roberts University; 2) Billy Graham's Evangelistic Association, Samaritan's Purse and Wheaton University; 3) Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), 700 Club, Operation Blessing, and Regents University; 4) Paul Crouch's Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN); 5) Lester Sumrall's LeSEA Broadcasting; 6) Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and Liberty University; 7) Dallas Theological Seminary and many of its esteemed graduates; 8) Tim LaHaye and his Pre-Trib Research Center and *Left Behind* series; 9) Jack Van Impe Ministries International; 10) Hilton Sutton and his World Ministries; 11) John Hagee Ministries and Christians United for Israel; 12) the Christian and Missionary Alliance through their *Alliance Academic Review* (since 1995) and *Essays on Premillennialism* (2002); 13) Jack Hayford and his Living Way Ministries, The King's College and Seminary (ministries of the Foursquare Church); and most recently by the Empowered 21: Global Congress on Holy Spirit Empowerment in the 21st Century (scheduled to be held in Tulsa, OK, April 8-10, 2010).

Notice should be taken that the vast majority of these organizations listed above are not churches, but ministries! While this remains a great way to impact this postmodern generation with the Eschatological Gospel of Jesus Christ (and while the Church should encourage, support and pray for these efforts) the primary medium through which the Eschatological Gospel should be taught and shared on a daily basis is through the arms, legs and voice of the local church (Body of Christ) around the world (especially from those church bodies which were established with the Eschatological Gospel as a primary doctrine). And as Romans 10:14 asks, "How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (*teacher—added by the author*)?

So, this remains the task ahead of the Church: to “restitute” the teaching and preaching of the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings of the Lord Jesus Christ—first through its foundational churches (Plymouth Brethren, Dispensational Baptist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Assemblies of God, and the Foursquare Church) and the corresponding seminaries that produce their preachers/teachers—and then in the remaining orthodox Christian denominations and their corresponding seminaries (starting with those whose roots intertwine with formation of the foundational churches listed above; such as other Pentecostal denominations, Methodists, other Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans/Episcopalians, and Lutherans). As mentioned above, this process has already started in the CMA and at Dallas Theological Seminary (and to a lesser degree at The King’s College and Seminary). In fact, it is to one of the 1998 articles of the *Alliance Academic Review* that the author now turns to further outline practical recommendations on how to accomplish this monumental task.

Douglas Matthews in his 1998 article “Approximating the Millennium: Premillennial Evangelicalism and Racial Reconciliation” provides sound recommendations for a plan to accomplish his proposed thesis, which is albeit a very narrowly focused slice of the author’s proposed thesis, though, still very germane to the recommendations at hand. His focus was to call or encourage the dispensational-oriented “premillennial Church,” as it approached the turn of the twenty-first century, toward what he terms “Approximational Pre-Utopianism” and which he defines as follows:

Approximationism views the kingdom of God, a present rule with a future concretized global manifestation, as a central eschato-biblical concept, and the central teaching of the King . . . replaces pretribulational escapism with posttribulational social responsibility. . . avoids both triumphalism and separatism. It avoids both naïve utopianism and cynical pessimism. It is, fundamentally, a shrewd expression of neighbor-love.

The present premillennial understanding of the purpose of eschatology often is as follows: it serves as ammunition for opportunistic, lifeboat evangelism; or it serves as a means for the opportunistic marketing of books that plot the end of the world. In contrast,

Approximationism views eschatology as a call to change and abandon idolatries such as racism. The purpose of biblical eschatology is not merely to understand, predict and interpret the future, in various ways; the point of eschatology is to change the present in the presence of the future (Matthews 1998:92-3).

Therefore, with this understanding of the new term approximationism, Matthews sees the Church “as an eschatological community that proclaims, celebrates, models, anticipates, and mediates the millennial *telos* of racial unity in an approximal fashion” (Matthews 1998:93).

From this point, Matthews makes the following recommendations for the Church (*of which the germane points were taken in form from his article and translated to the issue at hand*)

[emphasis added]:

- 1) The present Church needs to revive (and its seminaries need to teach) the fervent social action *and charismatic life portions of the Eschatological Gospel*;
- 2) “Churches should clearly condemn overt and covert” idolatry *and the heresies, lies and deceptions of Satan*;
- 3) The “writing, teaching, publishing and purchasing . . . of sensational dispensational books should be discouraged;”
- 4) The writings of theologians, *such as George Eldon Ladd, J. Dwight Pentecost, Billy Graham, John F. Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, William J. Dumbrell, Bart D. Ehrman, Norman Geisler, Gerhard Sauter; and the authors of Essays on Premillennialism (especially those who focused on current and future considerations; K. Neill Foster, Keith M. Bailey, Eldon Woodcock, Joel Van Hoogen, William R. Goetz, Donald A. Wiggins, and Matthew A. Cook)* can help to steer the Church and its seminaries back to the central focus *of the Eschatological Gospel*;
- 5) “The writings and stories of” *Eschatological Gospel teachers and preachers of church history* “should be read and discussed” in our churches and seminaries;
- 6) “Worship and hymnody in the local church” should focus more on “eschato-praxis” (or putting “hands and feet” to the Eschatological Gospel) *and strike a balance with being the only* “goal of true worship and praise”;
- 7) “The implications of the theology of the millennium need to be explored and heralded” (*and the author would add; taught and preached in churches by means of Bible Study and Sunday School curriculums and seminaries by means of courses based on the content of this thesis*);
- 8) “Biblical social praxis should be viewed as a secondary test of the” *proclamation of the Eschatological Gospel*; and
- 9) The Church should refocus all ministerial attempts on proclaiming the *faith, hope and love of the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings of Jesus Christ through the wisdom (discernment), insight (revelation), power (dunamis), and authority (exousia) of the Holy Spirit* [emphasis added] (Matthews 1998:93-7).

With this as an action plan, it is the author's hope that the Church will move closer toward becoming the "peaceful (*shalom*), pure and spotless" Body of Christ (Eph 5:27; Phil 2:15; 1 Thess 5:23; 1 Tim 6:14; James 1:27; and 2 Pet 3:14-15) that fulfills the Great Commission just prior to the Blessed Hope of the soon-coming Rapture of the Church.

In retrospect, this study should have accomplished the following purposes: 1) to encourage the ministries, churches and seminaries addressed above, which are already trying to put this into practice, to continue "fighting the good fight"; 2) to encourage those local churches (and their seminaries) of the foundational Eschatological Gospel to reinstitute, if they are not doing so already, the teaching and preaching of the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings; and 3) to encourage the other orthodox Christian churches (and their seminaries) to institute (or reinstitute as the case may be) the teaching and preaching of the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings to fulfill the "last sign" and the Great Commission of proclaiming the good news of faith, hope and love of the Eschatological Gospel of Both Comings to a lost and dying world. While endeavoring to accomplish the "last sign," these churches should also be vigorously fighting against the insidiously deceptive schemes of Satan in this twenty-first century Postmodern Era (Laodecian Church Period), especially as the Day of the *Parousia* of the Lord Jesus Christ rapidly approaches. And in final conclusion, the author would like to end with a phrase or two from the Church's two Eschatological Gospel Founding Fathers, the Apostles Paul and John, speaking of the soon coming Blessed Hope (the Rapture of the Church): "For I am confident of this very thing that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus"; "Maranatha"; and "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."