

Vicarious Sacrifice: Lewis Sperry Chafer: the Importance of Eschatology; Prophetic Future Tense Reports Back from the Future What Does Occur; Expanded Translation of 1 Thess 4:13–18; Some Corinthians Reject Resurrection of the Dead; Paul’s Refutation: If Christ Is Resurrected How Can One Argue against the Resurrection of Believers, 1 Cor 15:12

- (21) The extreme importance of including eschatology in one’s accumulation of doctrines in the eleven categories of systematic theology is addressed by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer:

The doctrine of things to come is extensive indeed. It may be safe to estimate that as much lies ahead yet to be experienced as has transpired in the past. Biblical prophecy is virtually history prewritten. Apparently God delights to disclose that which He will do. To do so is an achievement which humanity can neither approach nor understand. In this competency God demonstrates the truth that He is superior to all others. The advantage to the human family of being informed respecting the future when ability to discern it for themselves has been denied them is exceedingly great; yet to the vast majority of people, including even Christians, God’s revealed disclosures respecting the future are as though they had never been written. Those who habitually neglect the study of prophecy must of necessity go uninformed about the meaning of the past, the present, and the future. What God chooses to do is a sublime unity in itself. When the consummation of that unity is not envisaged, there can be no ground left for a right appreciation of the direction, value, and meaning of either the past or the present. God has not provided men with the material set forth by His predictions in vain. He expects that what He has said shall be welcomed just as all other portions of the Bible are received, and furthermore He has not left men to their helplessness in the understanding of His unfolding of future things. Since the knowledge of the future so determines the right understanding of past and present, no man is prepared to “preach the word” who habitually ignores divine prediction. The claim that the prophetic Scriptures cannot be understood is never made by those who give due attention to them. No more difficulty has been encountered in interpreting the Scripture bearing on Eschatology than the Scripture bearing upon Soteriology.

The supposed trouble respecting the interpretation of Eschatology originates in the fact that many theologians have from the first given themselves to the study of Soteriology almost exclusively, to the all-but-complete neglect of Eschatology. (pp. 138–39)

It becomes imperative, if any right understanding of Scripture is to be gained, to trace the distinctive order of events as set forth in Judaism to their divinely appointed completion. This the Synoptic Gospels do. Beginning with John and continuing to the end of Revelation, a new people composed of both Jews and Gentiles, a new divine purpose in a hitherto unrevealed age, with new predictions bearing upon a heavenly glory, are introduced, though—usually by way of contrast—much is added respecting the divine purpose of Israel.¹ (pp. 139–40)

- (22) It is the Eschatology category of Systematic Theology that infuses believers so informed with absolute confidence regarding the otherwise undisclosed future.
- (23) God has disclosed in His Scripture these future events in predictive/prophetic tenses. His divine decree contains every event in human history including those that He inserts into the ROM chip.
- (24) Therefore, when the pastor encounters a predictive/prophetic future tense then he must treat it as a fact of history that has not yet occurred.
- (25) In fact, Dana and Mantey's Greek Grammar carries this idea into its definition of the futuristic present tense:

The Futuristic Present. This use of the present tense denotes an event which has not yet occurred, but which is regarded as so certain that in thought it may be contemplated as already coming to pass.²

- (26) The passage we have just completed is an example of a doctrine that is revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit's knowledge of information in the divine decree about the provision of resurrection bodies for every believer in the Church Age.
- (27) Here is the expanded translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18:

¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Eschatology," in *Systematic Theology: Doctrinal Summarization* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 7:138–140.

² H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1955), 185.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 - But I do not wish for you to be ignorant, fellow believers, concerning those who have been caused to lie down and sleep in the status of physical death, for the purpose that you should not be caused to grieve as others who have no confidence regarding eternal life.

v. 14 - For if we believe, and we do, that Jesus Christ died physical death and three days later was resurrected, then we also believe at the Rapture of the Church God will bring with Jesus those believers that have died during the Church Age.

v. 15 - We communicate this doctrine to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and survive until the Parousia of the Lord, will not go up before those who have already died.

v. 16 - For the Lord Himself will descend from the third heaven with a loud command for the archangel, Seraph Gabriel, to give the order for God's bugler to sound reveille, and those who are physically dead will be resurrected first.

v. 17 - Then we [those believers physically alive at the Rapture] who are alive and remain [following the ascension of Group A] will be raptured ["caught up": ἀρπάζω (*harpázō*): Latin: *raptus*] together with Group A in the clouds to join a meeting with the Lord in the atmosphere of the first heaven, and so we all shall be with the Lord forever.

v. 18 - Therefore, encourage one another with these words by means of doctrine. (EXT)

(28) Paul expands on this doctrine in 1 Corinthians 15. We will note select verses that provide more information on the subjects of the Parousia, the Rapture, and the resurrection body.

1 Corinthians 15:12 - Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised [ἐγήγερται (*egégertai*)] from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (NASB)

(1) There is a significant number of believers at the church in Corinth that does not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

- (2) Members of the Corinthian church were primarily Greeks influenced by the pagan philosophies of the day.
- (3) Paul engages the debate beginning in verse 12 and takes up the argument for the rest of the chapter.
- (4) As we move through select verses, we will observe from time to time certain concepts will consistently appear. In verses 12–16, Paul presents his major proposition:

Some at Corinth had argued that there was no resurrection of the dead. He replies that this is absolutely contrary to the proclamation that Christ has been raised. The perfect tense of *egégerται* [ἐγήγερται] (“has been raised”), with its emphasis on the present reality of the historic fact is important to Paul. In the present context he uses the same verb form seven times, in each case in reference to Christ (vv. 4, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20). When speaking of “the resurrection of the dead,” he uses the present tense of the same verb (vv. 15, 16). The conditional sentences throughout this section begin with *ei de*, the condition being an assumed fact: “If it is preached [as it is] that Christ has been raised ...” (v. 12). The same is true of vv. 13, 14, 16, 17, and 19.³

- (5) Paul reminds them that he has preached Christ’s resurrection at Corinth, so how can they contend there is no resurrection of the dead?
- (6) He begins with a logical conclusion based on his ministry to them compared with their current opinion regarding resurrection.
- (7) The verse opens with the formula of a first class conditional sentence: the protasis is introduced with the conditional particle **εἰ (ei)**: “if” plus the present passive indicative of the verb: **κηρύσσω (kērússō)**: “preached”: “If Christ is preached and He is.”

NOTE: εἰ (ei) plus the indicative mood indicates a first-class condition.

- (8) What about Christ is preached is introduced by the conjunction **ὅτι (hóti)**: “that” which introduces the argument to which the preceding words refer.

³ W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reference Library, 1976), 10:283.

- (9) The Corinthians argue there is no resurrection. Paul begins his counterargument by stating what has already been preached as absolute truth: that “He has been raised,” the perfect passive indicative of the verb ἐγείρω (*egeirō*): “has been resurrected.”
- (10) Christ has been raised from the dead (**νεκρός** [*nekrós*]), therefore, if this is true – and it is – then the question Paul poses in the apodosis renders mute the assertion there is no resurrection.
- (11) The apodosis is introduced by the interrogative adverb πῶς (*pós*): “how.”
- (12) Paul now inquires that in view of the fact stated in the protasis, how can some at Corinth contend there is no resurrection of the dead?

1 Corinthians 15:12 - If Christ is preached [κηρύσσω (*kērússō*)], and He is [**protasis of a 1st-class condition**], that He has been resurrected from the dead, [**apodosis**] how do some of you assert that there is no resurrection from the dead? (EXT)

- (13) The importance of the resurrection of Christ cannot be overstated. Our eternal salvation depends upon the veracity of this event.
- (14) If the Father were not satisfied with the work of Jesus on the cross, if somehow the Lord was not qualified in some way to be our substitute, then we remain lost in our sins.
- (15) Paul assumes this false assumption as true as he continues his argument:

1 Corinthians 15:13 - But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; (NASB)