

## INTRODUCTION TO ESCHATOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

- Great stories have great endings. The same is true with the factual story of redemptive history
- Things are not all buttoned up in the history of redemption. The promise to Abraham is certainly not all fulfilled.

Zechariah 8:20–23 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘*It will yet be* that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities.’<sup>21</sup> ‘The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, “Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I will also go.”’<sup>22</sup> ‘So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.’<sup>23</sup> “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”’ ”

Isaiah 2:2–4 Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it.<sup>3</sup> And many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.

Isaiah 11:6–9 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them.<sup>7</sup> Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox.<sup>8</sup> The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den.<sup>9</sup> They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.

---

<sup>1</sup> Notes adapted from Eschatology courses from the Expositor’s Seminary (Dr. Matt Waymeyer) and the Master’s Seminary (Dr. Michael Vlach).

## I. What Is Biblical Eschatology?

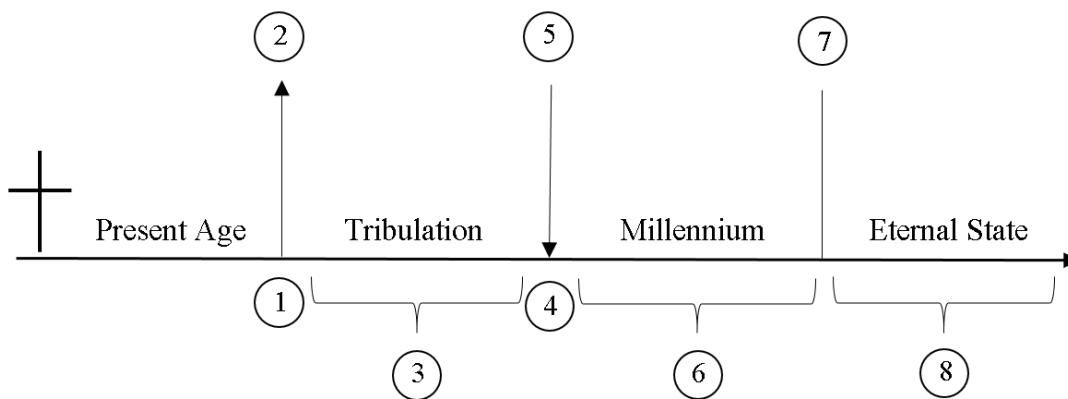
- The word “eschatology” comes from the Greek adjective ἔσχατος (“last”) and refers to the study of “last things” or “end times.” More specifically, it refers to the study of biblical prophecy about the future events surrounding the end of the age when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth to bring about the restoration of all things.
- However, the “end times” is somewhat of a misnomer. Eschatology describes the end of this brief, present age. That time will make the beginning of a much longer and glorious time (e.g. the Millennial Kingdom, the Eternal State).

## II. An Overview of Biblical Eschatology

Most of biblical eschatology can be understood within the framework of the following eight chronological events described in Scripture:

1. The Imminent Rapture of the Church
2. The Judgment Seat of Christ
3. The Seventieth Week of Daniel
4. The Divine Restoration of Israel
5. The Second Coming of Christ
6. The Millennial Reign of Christ
7. The Final Judgment of Unbelievers
8. The Final State of Eternity

It is helpful to visualize these eschatological events in a timeline extending from the present church age to the eternal state:



We will attempt to examine the biblical prophecies about these future events. Attention will be given to disagreements over the timing and nature of their fulfillment.

### **III. Why Study Biblical Eschatology?**

The Bible not only exhorts believers to fix their hope completely on the grace to be brought to them at the return of Christ (1 Pet 1:13), but also describes them as those who: eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:7); eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil 3:17); wait for the Son of God from heaven (1 Thess 1:10); look for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of Christ (Titus 2:13); and love His appearing (2 Tim 4:8). As God's people eagerly long for the return of their Savior, Revelation promises divine blessing to those who give attention to the words of eschatological prophecy (1:3; 22:7).

There are many benefits to studying eschatology:

#### **1. Motivation to Repent and Flee the Coming Wrath**

Isaiah 63:1-6 Who is this who comes from Edom, with garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, This One who is majestic in His apparel, Marching in the greatness of His strength? "It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." 2 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? 3 "I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. 4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come. 5 "I looked, and there was no one to help, and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me, and My wrath upheld Me. 6 "I trod down the peoples in My anger and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

Zephaniah 1:15-18 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, 16 A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the Lord; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the Lord's wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Joel 2:11-14 The Lord utters His voice before His army; surely His camp is very great, for strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great and very

awesome, and who can endure it? <sup>12</sup> “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; <sup>13</sup> and rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil. <sup>14</sup> Who knows whether He will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him, even a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God?

Luke 3:7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

- S. Lewis Johnson: “The fear of coming judgment is a legitimate reason to repent and turn to Christ.”

## 2. Urgency in the Pursuit of Holiness

2 Peter 3:11–14 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! <sup>13</sup> But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless

Titus 2:11–14 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup> instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

2 Corinthians 5:9–10 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Romans 13:11–14 *Do* this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. <sup>13</sup> Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.

Colossians 3:1–10 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died and your life is

hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. <sup>6</sup> For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him

1 Timothy 6:11-15 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness. <sup>12</sup> Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup> I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, <sup>14</sup> that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> which He will bring about at the proper time – He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords

1 John 2:28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

1 John 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

### **3. Joy in the Midst of Trials**

1 Peter 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

### **4. Patience in the Throes of Affliction**

James 5:7-11 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. <sup>8</sup> You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup> Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. <sup>10</sup> As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. <sup>11</sup> We count

those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.

## 5. Perseverance in the Face of Persecution

2 Thessalonians 1:3–10 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater; <sup>4</sup> therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. <sup>5</sup> *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. <sup>6</sup> For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup> and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, <sup>8</sup> dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup> when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

## 6. Zeal in Devotion to Discipleship

Hebrews 10:24–25 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

## 7. Faithfulness in Service to God

Matthew 24:42–51 “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. <sup>44</sup> “For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*. <sup>45</sup> “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>46</sup> “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. <sup>47</sup> “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. <sup>48</sup> “But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ <sup>49</sup> and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; <sup>50</sup> the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know, <sup>51</sup> and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 25:1–13 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> “Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. <sup>3</sup> “For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the

prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> “Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. <sup>6</sup> “But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet *him*.’ <sup>7</sup> “Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> “The foolish said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> “But the prudent answered, ‘No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> “And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> “Later the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open up for us.’ <sup>12</sup> “But he answered, ‘Truly I say to you, I do not know you.’ <sup>13</sup> “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”

Matthew 25:14–30 “For *it is* just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. <sup>15</sup> “To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> “Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. <sup>17</sup> “In the same manner the one who *had received* the two *talents* gained two more. <sup>18</sup> “But he who received the one *talent* went away, and dug *a hole* in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup> “Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> “The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ <sup>21</sup> “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>22</sup> “Also the one who *had received* the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.’ <sup>23</sup> “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ <sup>24</sup> “And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no *seed*.’ <sup>25</sup> “And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ <sup>26</sup> “But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no *seed*.’ <sup>27</sup> “Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my *money* back with interest. <sup>28</sup> “Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’ <sup>29</sup> “For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. <sup>30</sup> “Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

1 Corinthians 3:10–15 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. <sup>14</sup> If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

<sup>15</sup> If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. <sup>3</sup> But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by *any* human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. <sup>4</sup> For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

## 8. Hope in a World of Corruption

Romans 8:18-25 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. <sup>24</sup> For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

## 9. Comfort in a Season of Grief

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words.



## 10. Amazement at the Wisdom of God

Romans 11:33–36 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! <sup>34</sup> For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? <sup>35</sup> Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? <sup>36</sup> For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

## 11. Diligence in Ministry to Others

1 Peter 4:7–11 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer. <sup>8</sup> Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without complaint. <sup>10</sup> As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup> Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

## 12. Encouragement in an Age of Darkness

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup> But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; <sup>5</sup> for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; <sup>6</sup> so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

## 13. Steadfastness in the Work of the Lord

1 Corinthians 15:50–58 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. <sup>55</sup> “O DEATH,

WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; <sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

2 Timothy 4:1-8 I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. <sup>6</sup> For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; <sup>8</sup> in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

QUESTION: How should this affect the way that we disciple and shepherd people to live in light of biblical eschatology?