

Chapter 4

Can We Know The Future?

Should We Seek to Understand The Future?

Is understanding the future a useful pursuit? How we answer this question has a lot to do with our paradigm. How important is it to understand the future and whether it is even possible is the purpose of this chapter. The scripture makes it quite clear that God intends for us have some degree of understanding of the future:

John 16:13 (NKJV)

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

We can see from this verse that part of the very purpose of the Holy Spirit is to give us insight regarding things to come. [1] We could also fill many pages citing prophetic scriptures that deal with the future. This makes it obvious that God thinks showing us the future is important. Though this book is not exclusively about eschatology (the study of last things), [2] addressing issues regarding the end times will be necessary and important if we are to establish a new paradigm that does not hinder or misdirect us from the destiny God has for us.

J.F. Walwood states that, “Eschatology is not designed to satisfy curiosity, but to provide an intelligent comprehension of the future as a guide for the present program, and a sure ground for hope.” [3] Whatever Walwood’s eschatology may be, he makes an excellent point. We should seek to understand the future so we can make plans in the present aimed at future goals. Unfortunately, too much of eschatological study has been based on a desire to satisfy curiosity. I suspect that, as we draw nearer to the fulfillment of biblical prophecies and understand them better, our motivation will move from curiosity to need. When we begin to see the appearing of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom as a real solution to the issues we face, then we will long for it.

The Nature of Planning

The very nature of planning in this life is such that we look to the future. Everyone makes plans in the present based on their perception of the future. [4] If you believed an airplane would crash exactly where you are twenty-four hours from now, you would make plans to be somewhere else at this time tomorrow. Because our understanding of the future plays a major part in our planning, I believe there is a great amount of spiritual warfare in this area. Satan would like to confuse and misdirect our planning as a way of hindering our progress. Misinformation has always been a tactic of war.

When you stop and think about it, predicting the future is really quite practical. It is a matter of goals, plans, and strategies — and how much control one has over the variables. For example, I can make plans with my wife to have dinner at our favorite restaurant on Friday evening at six o’clock. I can predict that future event with a large degree of accuracy because I have planned it and I have control over most of the variables.

On the other hand, predicting how and when the Kingdom of God will appear on earth is

a bit more difficult. There are millions of variables involved that can cancel out the plans and strategies I might make—and I have control over virtually none of them. But there is One who is aware of every variable, is very good at controlling them, and has a clear and perfect strategy to see the Kingdom of God appear on earth. That One is Jesus Christ. Therefore, to understand the future, I need to understand His goals, plans, and strategies. Then I can make my plans accordingly, leaving control of the variables up to Him.

Yes, looking to the future is speculative and lends itself to the development of conflicting and sometimes controversial views. From a theological perspective, George Ladd comments (regarding the differing interpretations of the millennium) that “...the discussion has often been attended by more heat than light.” Unfortunately this is true theologically and politically. As a result, many have avoided the topic altogether or have decided the future simply cannot be known. But as already pointed out, God does want us to understand the future! *The next chapter will outline four general eschatological views and will provide some foundational information on this issue.*

The Future and The New World Order

There is a secular belief system regarding the future which expects a New World Order or a New Age. This belief system, which is in conflict with Christian belief, is certainly multifaceted and is no more standardized among its rank and file than the theological view of the future among Christians. New World Order and New Age are general terms and are somewhat ambiguous to most Christians because most of us simply have not studied how these people think. It is a vision for world domination under a global government melded with a spiritual view of the future in which man is expected to attain to levels of intellect and technology that, if achieved, would be similar to what we now regard as supernatural.

The New World Order/New Age movement is of Satan’s design. But I find it interesting that these thinkers seem to be sensing, though in a distorted fashion, what the Kingdom of God will be like when it appears on earth. This should not surprise us. Unlike man, Satan was not made in the image of the Creator and therefore has no creativity. Satan can only look at what God is doing and attempt to copy it, pervert it, and replace it. Therefore, the New World Order/New Age movement is a counterfeit designed to resemble the coming Kingdom of God. [5]

Though new world order humanists are generally regarded as secular with little reference to a god, it is nevertheless satanically religious. But Satan will not stop with simply deceiving man into worship of self, his ultimate desire is to be the object of worship himself. Satan revealed this when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness.

Matthew 4:8-10 (NKJV)

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

Mat 4:9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

Mat 4:10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Therefore, we can expect to see an antichrist system emerge that is very religious and which will seek to replace Christianity. So the New Age/Antichrist movement is simply Satan’s attempt to replace people’s vision of what the Bible calls “the age to come” with a satanically inspired man-made version. [6]

The idea of a new world order with peace on earth was not Satan's idea. With the birth of Jesus Christ came the announcement of peace: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Satan has only taken the idea of the Kingdom age, perverted it, repackaged it, and is attempting to sell it as the answer to world's problems. It is a counterfeit.

I have heard it said that when United States Treasury agents are trained to spot counterfeit money, they spend most of their time learning all they can about real currency. This makes sense because there is an infinite number of variations in counterfeiting and all of them could never be studied. But if the agent knows genuine currency well enough, he will be able to spot any counterfeit. Likewise, the best protection against new age deception is to learn all we can about Jesus, His strategy, and the Kingdom age to come from the Word of God. [7] We must look to the future. I trust this book will help in serving that purpose.

Peace on Earth?

What a wonderful thought: peace on the whole planet and people acting in good will toward one another! However, since the serpent deceived Eve until now, we have not had peace on earth. In fact, when Jesus came He said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt 10:34).

So what gives? Were the angels misinformed? Maybe they were singing from the wrong hymn book. No, of course not! Jesus certainly came to bring peace on earth; it's just that prophetic announcements are usually designed to cast a vision for the future but seldom explain the process to arrive there.[8] Peace on earth and good will toward men describes a vision of the age to come, but it does not describe the road to get there. Though the prophetic announcement of Christ's birth didn't describe the process to bring peace on earth, Jesus certainly did! In fact, He went into great detail. But if we fail to recognize that Jesus and His message are political in nature, not just religious, we will miss it.

As we gain understanding of the future and begin to grasp God's plans and strategies, we will recognize and reject the counterfeit strategies and misdirection of the enemy. As we align ourselves with God's plans, maybe we can hasten the coming of that day (see 2 Peter 3:12). [9]

Paradigm Builder

Our understanding of the future influences our plans in the present. Everyone plans and acts in the present based on their understanding of the future.

Before reading this chapter, how would you describe your position regarding this concept?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree

How would you describe your position regarding this concept after reading this chapter?

1 Strongly Disagree - 2 Disagree - 3 Neutral/Unsure - 4 Agree - 5 Strongly Agree