

CRAIG C. HILL

In God's
Time



THE BIBLE AND THE FUTURE

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Participant's Guide

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This course is based on the book

In God's Time: The Bible and the Future

by Craig C. Hill

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Preparation for Session 1: Are We There Yet?

Learning Objectives:

At the end of this session, students should be able to:

- Describe the present state of thinking in the church on the subject of the End Times.
- Define “eschatology.”
- Explain and evaluate the statement, “Christianity is irreducibly eschatological.”
- Explain the significance of Jesus’ resurrection in Christian thinking.
- Identify and describe some of the challenges facing traditional Christian views of the future.

Connecting with Scripture:

Read the following passages and answer the question in the space provided.

- Isaiah 60:18-22
- Mark 1:14-15

Both of these passages deal with "God's time." Isaiah 60:18-22 looks forward to a future restoration of Israel, while Mark 1:14-15 says, "the time is fulfilled."

In the great scheme of God's work in creation and human history, what "time" is it now?

Study for this Session:

- Read Chapter 1 of *In God's Time*.

Study Overview:

This short chapter focuses on the meaning and importance of eschatology—the belief in God’s final victory over evil, futility, and death. The chapter challenges both an uncritical embrace of eschatology on the part of some Christians and an overhasty divorce from it on the part of others.

It also highlights problems with traditional eschatologies, such as their view of time, cosmology, and creation. Modern Christians must face these issues squarely as they think about this vital subject.

Eschatology – The study of the “Last Things,” which may also be referred to as the “End Times” or the “Last Days.”

Eschatology is a response to the problem of evil. It is the claim that “God wins” in the end.

Interest in the End Times is at perhaps an all time high. Despite the record-breaking sales of Last Days books and merchandise, many Christians find the subject off-putting, confusing, or offensive.

Eschatology is at the heart of traditional Christian proclamation. The event that most shaped the early Church’s beliefs of the future was the resurrection of Jesus, which they saw as proof of God’s ultimate victory.

Personal Reflection – Session 1: Are We There Yet?

As you reflect on the readings, consider the following questions and be prepared to share your thoughts during class.

1. In what ways have you already encountered the subject of the “Last Days”? What was your response?
2. How have your experiences encouraged or prevented you from believing that God is present and active in this world? Do you find it compelling to say that, in the end, “God wins”?
3. What about the subject “The Bible and the Future” do you find interesting? Challenging?
4. As you look toward the next decade, what are your images of future? Are they hopeful? Hopeless? Ambivalent?
5. What are your grounds for hope?

Class Session 1: Are We There Yet?

Opening Prayer

O God, by whose command the order of time runs its course: Forgive, we pray thee, the impatience of our hearts; make perfect that which is lacking in our faith; and while we tarry the fulfillment of thy promises, grant us to have a good hope because of thy word; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

--Gregory of Nazianzen, 330-390¹

Focusing

During this first class session, you will:

- Introduce yourself ;
- Describe the ways in which you have already encountered the subject of the End Times;
- Share with others what you expect to learn by the end of the course.

Video

As you watch the video, take notes to answer the following questions:

1. What is eschatology and why does it matter?

Video (cont'd)

2. Are some beliefs about the future essential to Christian faith? If so, which? Why these?

3. How is the book of Revelation like the book of Genesis?

Activity: Beginning the Journey at Home

For this activity, you will break into small groups and discuss the following questions:

1. Do people in your church talk about the End Times? Why or why not?

2. What in your experience might make it difficult for you to believe the Bible's message of hope?

3. What in your experience might *encourage* you to believe the Bible's message of hope?

Be prepared to share your group's thoughts with the rest of the class.

Group Discussion

1. Why are End Times books so phenomenally successful? What do you see as their good and bad points?

2. Do you think that God has a plan for history? For your life? If so, do you have access to that plan? How?

3. Why does the resurrection of Jesus matter?

4. Why might Christians disagree about issues covered in this course? How much disagreement is acceptable?

Conclusion & Closing Prayer