

END OF THE AGES

By

Curtis Dickinson

“Now these things happened unto them by way of example and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come” (I Cor. 10:11).

The revelation which God has given through the Bible begins with the creation of time — “in the beginning” — and ends with the announcement that “time shall be no more,” when there will be no need of sun or moon to mark time, for all will be eternity. In between there are the “ages,” and we live at the end of the ages.

The apostle Paul wrote the Corinthian letters long after the establishment of the new covenant. The old economy under the law of Moses had been displaced by the new economy, established by the death and resurrection of Christ. The “end of the ages,” therefore, did not refer to the end of the dispensation under Moses, for it had ended several years before; but rather to the end of all ages, a time beginning with the resurrection of Christ and extending to the culmination of time at the day of judgment.

It is highly significant of man’s broken and sinful condition that the farther he progresses toward the very end of the ages the less he is able to cope with them and the farther he is removed from the meaning of ages past. Refusing the revelation of God he seeks to create meaning for life and to understand the purpose of the present apart from ages past and the meaning God has given them. Tragically, the more he forces his own ideas upon the process of time the farther he gets from the purpose of the Creator, and the farther he gets from the Creator the less adequate he is to understand the purpose of his being. The closer he comes to the ultimate end of the ages the less understanding he has of what it is all leading to. He develops an attitude of hopelessness and helplessness. He gives up what faith he had and becomes pragmatic, taking the path of least resistance. This road leads to apathy and despair.

The apostle Paul explained that the things that happened in ages past were written in scripture for the example and admonition of us who live in this last age. Although we live under the new covenant it is impossible to understand it and to present it fully without knowing something of the ages past. For example to understand the curse of death from which Christ saves us, we must know something of the sin of Adam which brought about that curse in the first place. According to the record, death was brought about by man’s rebellion against the Creator. Failing to understand this has given rise to a multitude of false religions, false hopes and interpretations of death which are utterly preposterous as well as tragic. Failure to understand the curse that God placed upon the entire creation leaves men vulnerable to all manner of false interpretations of prophecy. That curse of death and disruption of the created order was extended to all the world, thus making it impossible for man to have dominion over it as he was commanded to do. When man fell everything under his dominion fell. The curse will not be removed until the day when the entire creation is destroyed, along with the destruction of ungodly men.

Old Testament history focused on the curse and its meaning. There we are shown the expulsion of Adam and Ever from Paradise and eventually of their death because of sin, then the destruction of the world by water as a judgment upon sin and an example of

the ultimate destruction by fire (Gen. 3:17, 6:7–23). There is recorded the example of Sodom and Gomorrah which Jude says is an example of the judgment of the ungodly, who are to be destroyed by eternal fire (Jude 7). And there are the other examples of judgment falling upon Israel after they had been saved out of Egypt, each of these judgments bringing death to those who sinned against God and defied his purpose. The sacrificial ceremonies, so meticulously observed, all point to the curse of sin and death and to the solution of it through the death of Jesus.

The center of all the ages is the gospel of Christ. Christ came into the world to become a curse for us — to take our humanity, to take our sins, and to take our death for sin on the cross — thus lifting the curse from those who by faith and obedience become his people. This is the meaning by which God satisfies His own justice, that man might have eternal life of his own. Failure to recognize this one issue is failure to be what we were created to be and thus to fly in the face of God's purpose. It is sin — the opposition to God's perfect purpose — that clogs the machinery of life and causes the tragic state of human suffering all around us.

When the apostle Paul was chosen to reveal the truth of God to the gentiles he wrote to Timothy that he should “suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his won purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but has now been manifested by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Tim. 1:8–10).

In the realm of eternity, before time had begun, God had clearly fixed His purpose for man that was yet to be created. The essence of that purpose was manifested by the appearing of Christ, by His abolishment of death and by His bringing immortality to light in the resurrection. In all of history there could be nothing more extreme than Christ leaving His equality with God and taking upon Himself human flesh, and nothing is seen as more absolute with regard to man than the finality of a public execution, which Christ underwent as our representative. The purpose of God has not been revealed to man by scientific discovery, by treaties and wars between great nations, nor its historic catastrophes. His purpose for all time — for eternity — is revealed in what happened at the cross!

All time is woven around the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul writes that the whole creation groans and travails until this day, looking for the time when the curse will be lifted at the day of resurrection, when there will be a new heaven and new earth and a new body for all those who are redeemed by Christ (Romans 8:20–23).

The culmination of the gospel and end of this period of redeeming man by faith in Christ will be the culmination of the ages and of all history. But what we are talking about here is entirely too extreme for sophisticated man. The Bible is talking about absolutes. Holiness is absolute. God is totally pure, absolutely righteous, and he expects man to be the same. Sin is absolute; that is, it is totally unacceptable to God, even a small sin, and must be eradicated — completely eradicated by destruction of the sin and the sinner in the day of judgment. Even the world itself, under the curse of sin because of man, finally is to be destroyed. This is entirely too much for man who imagines himself as a kind of landlord over the world and as having a kind of permanent domain over it. The modern religion of evolutionism has taught that not only has the earth been in

existence for billions of years but that it must continue on for millions and perhaps billions more that evolution may continue the processes of change. For us to suggest — nay, for God to suggest — that He one day will bring down the entire structure in one fell swoop strikes at the very heart of the religion of evolution. It is easier to ignore the past ages and certainly more socially acceptable to deny that we are at the “end of the ages.”

What most men want from Jesus is not this kind of absolute and extreme truth and action. What men want from Christ is assistance on their merry way to fulfilling their own ambitions which they design for themselves. A man wants to eat, drink and make merry in his own way and when the way gets difficult he calls on Jesus to give him a hand. He would be embarrassed to do this as a total alien so he joins the “church of his choice” and observes the more obvious rituals. He divides his attention between church activities and the general concern of the state, and is careful not to make waves or to become “too radical.” Conveniently he accepts the Jewish concept of a millennium and interprets the prophecies accordingly, instead of interpreting them as centering on Christ and His lifting the curse through His death and ultimately ending it through judgment. It isn't nearly so absolute and final to think of some day in the future with a thousand years of earthly bliss as it is to see that this is the last age and the last chance.

The issue of the age is radical and extreme, a life and death issue. Salvation is not a matter of merely making life more comfortable in this world, but of redeeming man from this world and its false hopes. It is a hundred and eighty degree turn from the view point of the world to the view point of God, from pursuing one's own designs to pursuing the will of God, and from the ultimate end of death to the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose which is immortality in His image for His people. The issue is all the more sharply defined by the fact that we are living in the last age!

The church today is splintered into a thousand fragments over issues which would vanish if we saw, as did Paul, that the “end of the ages” has come to this generation. The basic issue is not resolved by speaking in tongues, or being physically healed, or by generating “exciting” experiences. It is not resolved by forcing an attitude of equality or wider fellowship or making church music contemporary — which in many cases means destroying it. What difference do any of these things make to the world, or to a person in the church who is unaware of the purpose of God? Millions are sidetracked from the purpose by Millennial hopes. The principle concern of a great portion of the church today is with a future age, which will never come, because this is the last one.

Our concern, therefore, must be in making known God's eternal purpose through the Gospel, the death and resurrection of Christ, and bringing our lives into line with God's purpose by keeping His commandments. All the things written in the Old Testament, as well as the New, are there for our admonition, to teach us the nature and will and purpose of God, in this age — not some future one. The future is eternity, with life for God's people and for God's people only. He does not deal in half-measures. His purpose is pure, absolute and inexorable, and the means by which it is accomplished is extremely radical and totally conclusive, as well as totally different from the cheap grace that is being offered today by religious quacks who tell you to just whisper a prayer to Jesus and all is well. The purpose of the Creator demanded the death of His Son and it demands that all who fulfill that purpose become “dead unto sin,” not only by their baptism into His death (Romans 6:3) but also by denying the demands of sin that are so loud in the world today.

We face a world of powers that are devoted to Satan, potential problems and forces too vast to estimate, and fears men have seldom felt before. But all that God has performed in the past is recorded for our benefit, for us “upon whom the end of the ages are come.” The issue of this years, and all the years left, is the issue resolved at the cross. This year, let us subordinate all other purposes and causes to the purpose of God revealed in Christ. It is the one purpose that is eternal, and cannot fail.

.....
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries.
Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute
Curtis’ articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article
for permission to be valid. Vol. XVII, Number 1.
.....