

THE THREE ‘R’^s—RETURN, RESURRECTION AND REWARDS

Eschatology is a most frustrating search for truth. With all the views and ‘mils’-premil, postmil, amil, and aroundthemil, it seems hopelessly confusing. In my own study, years ago, I read Hal Lindsey and Marcellus Kik, and much in between, and NEVER found a satisfactory answer to when Jesus was to return.

SURELY, the Lord would not have left us ignorant, would He?

Why does it say in the beginning of Revelation that ‘blessed is he who reads it’ (1:3) if it were not so? Could THEY, back then, actually understand what was being said? If so, why can’t we? How could someone in the first century be blessed to read something that was supposedly not to happen for thousands of years in the future? How would someone in the first century be blessed when NO ONE seems to know what is going on in the book even 2100 years later???

Something is awry somewhere! Why is this book so hard for us, in the 21st century, to understand (6 major views), when the folks in the 1st century could? After all, it was written TO them, was it not?

Remember, the ‘early church’ folks needed help to understand the most fundamental of things—remember Jesus chiding His disciples for being so thick? If eschatology is so difficult today, 2100 years after it was written, with so many theologians and scholars unable to fathom it’s depths, how in the world do we expect those folks way back then, with so little understanding, to make sense of it.

The key to understanding eschatology is simple (as it was meant to be). Pay attention to the **timelines**.
Period!

Is it that simple?? Surely not, you say. Surely YES, I reply. It is. Take a look again at the timelines that indicate WHEN the Lord was to return and instead of having a ‘commentary’ beside you when you read these verses, ask the Lord to guide you. Someone once rightly claimed that: “it is amazing how the Bible sheds light on the commentaries.”

The very book of Revelation begins and ends with the same timeline phrase:

Rev 1:1

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must **soon take place**. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

Rev 22:6

The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must **soon take place**."

Did you notice the words “soon take place”? What did the early church think when they read these verses? 1 century down the road? 10 centuries down the road? 20 centuries down the road? YOU KNOW THEY DIDN’T THINK THAT! They believe it exactly as it read—soon take place—all of it. Remember, Revelation begins AND ends with these words telling us that ALL in between will ‘soon take place’.

If this confuses your eschatological paradigm, then change it! It needs changing.

If timelines were not critical for the understanding of eschatology, then WHY USE THEM??

The Lord and His followers used such words as: **‘soon’ ‘shortly’ ‘quickly’ ‘the time is short’ ‘at hand’ ‘at the door’ ‘in a very little while’** etc. to describe His imminent return. Surely, these timeline words have to mean exactly what they say, do they not? If not, then WHY USE THEM?

If I were to tell a group of people that I was going away on a trip and will return, but have no idea when, I would say something like: “Folks, I am going on a trip, but will come back”. HOWEVER, if I want to let them know it will not be a long time, I will insert a timeline word such as: ‘soon’-“Folks, I am going on a trip, but will come back **soon**. Do you see the point? That timeline word is meant for only ONE thing and that is to let the listener determine the approximate time I will return. If I do not want them to know, I will NOT add the word. Simple!

I would like to take a look at only 2 verses for this article (just 2) and I think I can prove that the ‘3R’s can be demonstrated to have happened when the Lord and His disciples said it would—in the 1st century!

Let us turn to Matthew 16:27-28 which states:

Matt 16:27-28

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

There are a number of observations I would like you to consider:

First, in order for Jesus to reward every man, He must of necessity have to RETURN. Second, in order for Jesus to reward every man, He must of necessity have to RESURRECT every man Third, His purpose in returning and resurrecting every man was to REWARD them

We can see that ALL 3 of these events must happen contemporaneously.

NOW, the question is: “WHEN was this to happen?”

Jesus tells His 1st century disciples in no uncertain terms, WHEN it will be—

Matt 16:27-28

Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Conclusion: Jesus prophesied to **Return**, **Resurrect** and **Reward** before some of His 1st century disciples had died!

As plain as language can make it, so did the Lord make it plain to His disciples. The reason why WE cannot understand this plain language is that we have too many folks interpreting FOR US who interpret the plain words of the Bible to suit their own presuppositions.

If you take a look at the commentaries, you will see the gymnastics used by some commentators in order to give some other meaning to these plain words of the Lord.