

## Article of the Month ó May 2013

### Missions & Eschatology (8) ó 1 Corinthians

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There are some eschatological elements in this letter that deserve attention. The first is, that Paul connects the Lord's Return with consistent holy living.<sup>1</sup> He envisages a life of progressive sanctification in his believers, with as final result a blameless appearance. It is an expression, similar to the one he used when he wrote to the Thessalonians.<sup>2</sup> Peter connects living a holy life with the Return as well.<sup>3</sup> There can be no world missions without holiness; a holy missionary is one of the primary tools in God's hand.

At the Lord's Return there will also be the evaluation of our works. Whether the quality of it can stand the fire of judgment or not, will be seen at that day.<sup>4</sup> The question will be whether our works are of eternal value or not; whether we invested our time, money and talents in the furthering of God's Kingdom, or just in our earthly business.

Paul couples the receiving of the reward also with refraining from judgment.<sup>5</sup> Jesus exhorted His disciples already earlier not to judge.<sup>6</sup> The time for judgment has yet to come. Only then, when all comes out in the open,<sup>7</sup> when all data are available, will knowledge be complete enough for believers to not only judge the world, but even angels will be subjected to human judgment.<sup>8</sup>

Because the time is short, Paul says, should we not be tied up with relationships or attach much value to material possessions.<sup>9</sup> He expresses much urgency because this world in its present form is passing away.<sup>10</sup> His whole outlook on life is one of speeding along and not looking back, as he would also write to the Philippians later.<sup>11</sup>

One important eschatological characteristic is his thorough treatise of the resurrection, the cornerstone of Christian hope and doctrine,<sup>12</sup> which takes place just prior to Christ's Return,

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 1:7,8

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. 5:23

<sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. 3:11b,12a

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. 3:12-15

<sup>5</sup> 4:5

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 7:1,2

<sup>7</sup> 10:26

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. 6:2,3

<sup>9</sup> 7:29-31

<sup>10</sup> Something else he has in common with Peter, see 2 Pet. 3:7,10b,11a

<sup>11</sup> Philip. 3:12-14

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. 15:23,51-55

and immediately preceding the rapture, when the saints alive meet Him in the air, all returning to earth where they will rule with Him during the Millennium of Peace.<sup>13</sup>

In the same resurrection chapter Paul elaborates on some post-Millennial events, when Christ will have destroyed all hostile powers ó including death. Then He will turn the Kingdom of Heaven-on-earth over to God the Father and submit Himself again to Him.<sup>14</sup> By that time Jesus will have exercised all authority in heaven and on earth<sup>15</sup> for about 3,000 years ó after which we still expect the new heaven and the new earth.<sup>16</sup> How much Paul himself was longing for the Lord's Return is obvious from the passionate cry "Come, o Lord!" at the end of this letter.<sup>17</sup>

Adding eschatological elements to Gospel preaching is a proven biblical means to teach the Church vision for the coming Kingdom, the returning Lord and hence the need to reach out for lost souls. As such it is of great missiological value.

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 11:15-19; 16:18; 20:4-6

<sup>14</sup> 1 Cor. 15:24-28

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 28:18

<sup>16</sup> Rev. 21:1

<sup>17</sup> 1 Cor. 16:22b

