

Bloesch, Donald G. *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory*. 1-336. Downers, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

Donald was a renowned scholar and ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ. He had a PhD from the University of Chicago. Donald Bloesch was a professor emeritus at Dubuque, Iowa Theological Seminary. He has documented many books including *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity*, *The Struggle of Prayer* and *Freedom for Obedience*. *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory* has twelve chapters of three thirty-six pages with a chronological arrangement.

Chapter one unlocks Christian foundations and eschatology which can be seen as two subjects that belong inextricably together. God's truth is not revealed through social analysis, but God's Church uncovers truth through significant theological analysis. Social analysis alone is insufficient in defining the role of the Church in the plan of salvation. The true Church is directed by the living word of God.

The second chapter discusses the Church of God which should be prophetic and kerygmatic, which centers on the proclamation of Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Dialectical theology synthesizes communitarianism in which *koinonia* (fellowship) is connected to *kerygma* (proclamation) and *diakonia* (service).

In chapter three, Bloesch posits that Christ's death on the cross has paved the way for our redemption. Thus, when one accommodates the winds of modernity, it is progressive eschatology. The eschatological hope is to socialize humanity and promote peace for all creation. The focus of realized and millennial eschatology is not only on the progressive realization of the kingdom, but also on the invasion of history by a heavenly city aimed at bringing history into eternity.

Chapter four uncovers three positions which depict the relationship between the Church and Israel including supersessionism, dispensationalism, and reunions. Thus, the Church supersedes Israel as the covenantal community of faith. The literal fulfillment of Old

Testament prophecy in modern Israel is in the forthcoming kingdom, and Israel will be ultimately reunited with the Church as the sign of the end of time. The triumph of Israel must be integrally related to the triumph of the cross of Christ. Neoplatonism and Orthodox mysticism emphasize the teaching of life after death.

The fifth chapter unpacks the Christian tradition as radical existentialism. The Bible teaches the creation of the visible and invisible worlds. Thus, angels are used in the biblical narrative as servants of God in ruling the world. The conflict between the kingdom of light and that of darkness existed at the time of creation. Christ is victorious, and he will reign in this world. Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection are the eschatological consummation.

In chapter six, Bloesch portrays that Friedrich Schleiermacher typified the skepticism of the Enlightenment when he raised the conflicting question of whether there is any need for angels in Christian theology. Christ's kingdom is established at His second coming. At Christ's coming, there will be a period of thousand years, which is known as the millennium. Premillennialism is the final revelation of Christ, which is portrayed in terms of an apocalyptic prophecy into history. It also implies the imminence of God's kingdom.

Chapter seven focuses on dispensational premillennialism that the first Church will be caught up in the air and translated out of its world of gloom and despair. Thus, dispensationalists believe that Christ will come before the great tribulation. Hence, the dispensationalists are pretribulationists. Amillennialism holds that Christ's millennial reign began with the cross and resurrection victory, as evidenced by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Postmillennialism postulates that Christ's kingdom is proclaimed in history and it will culminate in a Christianized world prior to the second advent of Christ.

Chapter eight unravels that the resurrection of the dead is the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the grave. The whole being is described as both soul and body at the same time. The reading depicts purgatory as a place of cleansing and punishment for believers who

have not made adequate preparation for their sins, and are not ready for entrance into the heavenly kingdom. The communion of saints comprises both the visible and invisible Church.

Chapter nine elaborates that the militant Church signifies the struggling Church on earth. Significantly, the triumphant Church demonstrates the Church in repose, the Church in heaven with God. Both the living and the dead will be judged during the final judgment and general resurrection. Jesus Christ died for humanity and resurrected on the third day.

The tenth chapter centers on the Predestination acts as a means of salvation in the past, present, and future. The motifs in the Bible affirm the universal triumph of God's kingdom. The Church is the people of the new covenant and the sole eschatological reality. As a result of Israel's disobedience, God promised a new covenant to be written on the hearts of all believers (Jer 31:31-34). The New Testament is unequivocal in positing that both the Jews and the Gentiles should be included in the Christian mission.

Chapter eleven emphasizes that the judgment of God impinges on all humanity in this world. Thus, humans need certainty of hope and assurance. The faith of the modern Christian Church should be grounded in our Lord Jesus Christ. This implies that our Lord Jesus Christ judges all humanity according to our deeds. The Judgment of Christ will be fair and just without any partiality.

In chapter twelve, Bloesch reveals that Progressive evangelical theology is an inaugurated eschatology in which the Kingdom of God will be finalized in Christ. In the last days, God will judge all human beings justly and in love. In Christian eschatology, Jesus Christ will physically return to the earth before the millennium, a literal thousand-year golden age of peace.

In conclusion, the theme of the book is well articulated, but it lacks footnotes. In my viewpoint, I do not agree with the author saying premillennialism makes Christ's kingdom wholly of the future where it abandons this world to the devil. The author should have included historic premillennialism in his writing on page 95, but he discussed only the dispensational premillennialism alone. The

idea, Christ will come before the great tribulation appears incorrect to me given that Scripture affirms post-tribulation.

In addition, the assertion that immortality is confined in the resurrection from death seems unbiblical to me. The submission by the author to give prayers and offerings for the dead to console them is scripturally unsound to me. I strongly agree with the Evangelical Christians by rejecting the doctrine of purgatory on biblical grounds (Heb 9: 27).

Moreover, Donald Bloesch's *Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory* is a profound theological book worthy of much reflection. The author has achieved his purpose of writing the book, because the book has a merit of truth for contemporary Christians. The book denotes eschatological events which benefit Christians. But believers should herald the past, the present, future gospel of Christ.

Finally, the hope of Christians is not confined in history, nor in the millennial unfolding of history, rather it is located in the revelation of eternity which will be inaugurated by Jesus Christ. The book provides more insightful analysis of eschatology and its significant contributions to the field of Systematic Theology.

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