

Review of Waldron, *The End Times Made Simple: How Could Everybody be so wrong about Biblical Prophecy*

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Waldron SE 2008. *The end times made simple: how could everybody be so wrong about biblical prophecy*. New York: Calvary Press.

1. Introduction to the Author and the Book

Solid Ground Books (2013) provides the following information about the author of the book, Samuel Waldron:

Dr. Sam Waldron serves as the Professor of Systematic Theology at the Midwest Center for Theological Studies. This is an institution dedicated to the training of God's servants for both the vocational pastorate and effective service to the Lord Christ in other vocations. Prior to moving to Kentucky to pursue his doctorate at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, he was a pastor of the Reformed Baptist Church of Grand Rapids from 1977 to 2001. He is the author of numerous books and pamphlets including *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*.

¹ The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

The introduction to the book below includes its background setting, its eschatological position and a synopsis of the book.

Nowadays there is much confusion in the field of eschatology. On the one hand, believers are being advised to ‘follow the unbiblical, complex and bizarre scheme of Dispensationalism with its “Secret Rapture,” political Anti-Christ and worldly Millennium’ (WTS Books 2013).

On the other hand, the ‘full preterists’ inform us ‘that all biblical prophecy has been fulfilled’, and they say that we ought not to expect Christ to descend from the sky in judgment and triumph. However, in his book, *The end times made simple*, Waldron claims that both of these end-time schemes are incorrect and that the Bible teaching on the end-times is actually quite straightforward (WTS Books 2013).

Although he does not state it explicitly, Waldron holds an amillennialist *position*. One of the main differences between amillennialism and premillennialism revolves around the question as to ‘whether the thousand years of Revelation 20:1–6 is present or future’ (Waymeyer 2008). He elaborates as follows: ‘according to the amillennial interpretation, this thousand-year period consists of the present age which extends from the first coming of Christ to His second coming. In contrast, premillennialism teaches that the thousand years of Revelation 20 is future and will take place immediately after the second coming’ (Waymeyer 2008).

The following synopsis provides a good introduction to the book (Ebay Books 2007):

Rapture? Pre-Trib? Post-Trib? Millennium? Confused? You should be! In today’s Evangelical Christian world, eschatology—or the study of the ‘Last Things’—has been turned into a sort of pseudo-science with a plethora of authors claiming to know exactly the

scenario of events that are to take place just prior to the Lord Jesus Christ's return, as well as what the eternal state will be like. Often, these authors come to rather bizarre and unbiblical conclusions. Piece by piece, Samuel E. Waldron strips away years of false teaching and faulty exegesis thrust upon the church to reveal what the Bible, in its own simple but profound way, says about what will happen at the end of this present age.

2. A Summary of the Book

In his book, *The End Times Made Simple*, Waldron demonstrates the truth of the title. Although an understanding of ‘the end times will never be as simple as many other biblical doctrines’, Waldron demonstrates that the doctrine of the end times is not so difficult to understand as it is often made out to be (Wayne 2003).

In chapter three of his book, Waldron introduces ‘crucial principles of Biblical interpretation’ (p. 28). He maintains that when interpreting Bible passages dealing with prophecy, one should study ‘the clear before the difficult, the literal before the figurative and the general before the detailed’ (Waldron 2008:28). Usually, when people want to discover the meaning of the end times, they go directly to ‘two of the more difficult, figurative and detailed books in the bible’ (i.e. Daniel and Revelation) (Wayne 2003).

Waldron indicates that eschatology is ‘not confined to certain prophetic books of the Bible (like Daniel and Revelation). Prophecy permeates the whole Bible’ (Waldron 2008:28). The serious Bible prophecy student should, therefore, first read this material since it provides a platform for studying the more difficult books, such as Daniel and Revelation. We need to interpret ‘the prophetic books in light of the rest of the Bible, rather than the other way around’ (Wayne 2003).

Waldron claims that 'the two ages are divided by the judgement of the wicked and the resurrection of the righteous at Christ's return (1 Cor 15:22, 23, 50–55, 1 Thes 4:16)' (Waldron 2008:41). Waldron describes in detail 'the two-age view of world history' and in so doing 'shows the beautiful simplicity of God's prophetic plan' (Wayne 2003).

Waldron explains that 'this terminology or part of it' is used in the following sixteen New Testament passages: 'Matt 12:32 (in parallel with Mark 3:29); Mark 10:30; Luke 16:8; Luke 18:30; Luke 20:34–36; Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 1 Cor 2:6, 8; 1 Cor 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:21; Eph 2:2; 1 Tim 6:17–19; Titus 2:12; and Heb 6:5' (Reformed Baptist 2011; Waldron 2008:32–34). It can be concluded that 'this simple two-age view is clearly a basic building block' of eschatology in the New Testament (Reformed Baptist 2011).

Waldron spends a great deal of time comparing the two-age model (structure) with various other end-time views. He shows that the two-age model has, amongst other things, the following implications for eschatology (Waldron 2008:37, 40, 52–53; 91–92):

- 'This age and the age to come taken together exhaust all time, including the endless time of the eternal state' (p. 37).
- 'There is no period between "this age and the age to come"' (p. 40).
- 'There is no period after "the age to come"' (p. 40).
- 'This simple biblical structure of redemptive history is inhospitable to both premillennialism and postmillennialism' (p. 52–53).
- An exposition of the internal structure of Revelation 20:1–10 provides strong proof that the amillennial view of eschatology is the biblical view (p. 91–92).

In the last section of the book, Waldron provides the answers to many difficult questions relating to Bible prophecy, such as ‘the relationship between the Church and Israel, the intermediate state, heaven, hell, eternal punishment.’ In so doing, he covers the most important issues relating to the end times (Wayne 2003).

The book is divided into twenty-five chapters. The content of these chapters is divided into Parts and Sections as follows (WTS Books 2013):

‘Part 1: How old is your eschatology?’ (Chapters 1–2)

‘Part II: Eschatology made simple!’ (Chapters 3–13)

‘Part III: Next question please!’ (Chapters 14–25)

‘Section 1: Questions related to the Present Gospel or Church Age’ (Chapters 14–17)

‘Section 2: Questions related to the Imminent Return of Christ’ (Chapters 19–22)

‘Section 3: Questions related to the Resurrection’ (Chapter 23)

‘Section 4: Questions related to the Eternal State’ (Chapters 24–25)

3. Strengths of the Book

The book has four recognisable strengths.

Firstly, it is *scrupulously biblical*. In the light of this book, those who write off the amillennialists ‘as “non-literalists” or as those who don’t take the Bible seriously will have to reconsider their view.’ It is regrettable that nowadays amillennialists ‘are often dismissed in evangelical circles’ (Wayne 2003).

Secondly, it is a *useful handbook* for information on anything dealing with the end times. It is ‘not confined to simply looking at post, pre, or

amillennial viewpoints.’ It also discusses ‘many questions relating to Heaven and Hell, Christ’s second coming, the state of believers after their death, the Day of Judgment, eternal punishments, the new Heavens and the new earth.’ In addition, it deals with some common misunderstandings regarding the relationship between Israel and the Church (Three 17 Blogspot 2004).

Thirdly, it is a *relatively simple book*. At first glance one might be a bit sceptical about the title of the book. However, ‘Waldron avoids the excessive use of technical jargon, and is easy to follow.’ He includes ‘a few diagrams along the way to make matters even clearer.’ ‘The most complicated diagrams’ are used to explain ‘the complex schemes that have been devised by various men.’ The book is, in fact, correctly entitled, ‘The end times made simple’ (Three 17 Blogspot 2004).

Lastly, it is ‘*a practical book*.’ ‘Throughout the chapters’ Waldron indicates the practical application of the Bible ‘on this subject to different areas of our lives’ (Three 17 Blogspot 2004).

4. Weakness of the Book

The following is a summary of the description by Waymeyer (2013), a premillennialist, of *a* fundamental weakness in Waldron’s amillennial interpretation of Revelation 20: Waymeyer (2013) points out that the ‘first hermeneutical principle cited by Waldron involves the historical context of Revelation 20.’ He quotes Waldron (2008:85) who explains that:

The first and most basic principle of biblical interpretation is known as grammatical-historical interpretation. Simply stated this fundamental principle says that the Bible must be interpreted in terms of the normal grammatical meaning of the language and in a

way that makes sense in light of the historical context of the passage. The original sense of the words for the original author and readers is the true sense.

According to Waymeyer (2013), Waldron insists that ‘a commitment to the grammatical-historical approach poses a significant problem for the premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20:1–10,’ because the book of Revelation was written by John ‘to local churches in the first-century province of Asia’ that were undergoing persecution (Waymeyer 2013). He quotes Waldron (2008:86), who argues as follows:

A credible interpretation must exhibit a clear line of connection with this historical context. Since the premillennial interpretation of this passage asserts that this passage has to do with a drastically different and far distant period of time after the return of Christ, it faces up front a problem with the principle of historical interpretation.

Waymeyer points out that, on the one hand, Waldron argues that Revelation 20:1–10 cannot refer to ‘a time period after the second coming of Christ if it is required to “exhibit a clear line of connection” with the historical context of the book of Apocalypse’ (Waymeyer 2013). On the other hand, Waymeyer indicates that Waldron ‘agrees that the judgment described in Revelation 20:11–15 will take place in a far distant period of time after the return of Christ’ (Waymeyer 2013).

According to Waymeyer, Waldron’s argument ‘violates the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation ... in precisely the same way that he accuses the premillennialist of doing with Revelation 20:1–10’ (Waymeyer 2013). The problem arises: how can Waldron, as an amillennialist, conveniently accept ‘Revelation 20:11–15 being in the far and distant future’, but ceremoniously discard the possibility that the

events described in verses 1–10 could likewise take place in the future? (Waymeyer 2013).

5. Conclusion

As ‘a reformed Baptist scholar’, Waldron seeks ‘to serve the larger Church.’ This book offers ‘a comprehensive view of eschatology from the amillennial perspective’ (Internet Monk 2013). As such, it surpasses almost any other book (except for Kim Riddlebarger’s book, entitled, *A case for Amillennialism*) (Internet Monk 2013).

‘Waldron’s book is actually readable by someone who has read the *Left Behind* book series. It’s well written, illustrated with graphs, approaches the subject through the issues raised in *Left Behind*, and isn’t overwhelmed with a polemical tone even though it is a polemic’ (Internet Monk 2013).

There are numerous good scholarly good books on the topic of eschatology and Revelation. However, this book has ‘the best potential for presenting an alternative eschatology to any person eager to examine the subject’ (Internet Monk 2013). I strongly recommend this book as a source that can best bring you a clear and straightforward understanding of eschatology from an amillennial perspective.

This book needs to be ‘widely circulated so that the Church can see that the amil view ... is clearly taught in the Scriptures.’ However, that does not imply that ‘there are no problems’ relating to the amillennial view or that there are certain issues that cannot be debated (Wayne 2003).

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