

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Class: *“What Will the End of the World Be Like?”*

III. Theological Overview

Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Volume III, CPH, 1953.

Page 542: “Our old Lutheran theologians are not agreed on whether this passing away is to be defined more specifically as a total annihilation (Gerhard) or only as a transformation or conversion (Luther).”

Page 543: “All who assume a transformation of the creation must teach a change whereby the world in its entire present outward form really passes away on Judgment Day or comes to an end.”

Commission on Theology and Church Relations, LCMS, The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism, September 1989.

Page 20: “Since Christ has won the decisive victory over Satan, sin, and death in the past, future eschatological events are but the culmination of what has already been set in motion by this pivotal event in human history.”

The Signs of the End:

Page 20: “The signs of the end do not signify events which will happen only in the future. The church of every generation can expect to witness their occurrence...To be sure, these signs will become more evident and intense immediately preceding Christ's return, but every generation was and is acting responsibly in expecting Christ's return in its own lifetime. Watchfulness...must characterize the church's constant posture.”

Page 20: “The signs of the end are not intended to provide Christians a means by which they may calculate the exact time of Christ's second coming...The signs of the end presented in Scripture assure the Christian that Christ will surely return.”

Page 20: “Observing the signs has a positive significance for life in the present. They serve as a reminder of God's call to watchfulness, holy living, and service to Christ.”

Page 21: “Finally, the signs of the end do not belong necessarily to the category of the extraordinary or spectacular. The exhortations to be watchful...presuppose that the signs

will be a part of the ordinary course of history and therefore that discernment is necessary.”

Page 21: The Signs of the Times from Anthony Hoekema’s The Bible and the Future

1. The sign evidencing the grace of God: the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations.
2. The signs indicating divine judgment
 - A. Wars
 - B. Earthquakes
 - C. Famines and pestilences
 - D. Signs in the heavens
3. The signs indicating opposition to God
 - A. Tribulation (persecution of the faithful by unbelievers)
 - B. Apostasy (falling away from faith)
 - C. Antichrist

The most important sign of the end is the missionary preaching of the Gospel to all nations...As the church proclaims the Gospel to all nations, nothing shall prevail against it, not even the gates of hell. However, we must humbly admit that only God knows when this sign will have been completely fulfilled.”

Conclusion:

Page 44: “Taken in its totality, the Scriptural teaching on eschatology will prevent Christians from succumbing to two opposite extremes which from apostolic times have been a recurrent threat to faith—feverish preoccupation with the ‘signs of the times,’ and spiritual laxity based on the mistaken notion that Christ’s coming is no longer imminent. Neither of these distortions of the eschatological hope which is ours through Christ takes with full seriousness the meaning of that hope for life in the here and now.”

Page 44: “Repeatedly taught by Jesus and the apostles is the truth that the exact hour of Christ’s coming remains hidden in the secret counsels of God. The church ought not therefore engage itself in uncertain speculations regarding the signs of the times. Rather, Christians must devote themselves to the clear proclamation of Law and Gospel, that people may come to faith in Jesus Christ, and through daily repentance prepare for His coming.”