

## Liberty University Graduate Student Research Symposium Proposal:

Title: Living In Light of Armageddon: W.A. Criswell, Communism, and The Cold War

Proposal: This paper examines the eschatological views of W.A. Criswell, and their impact on conservative Southern Baptist thought throughout the 1960s. The 1960s was a tumultuous period for the Southern Baptist Convention. W.A. Criswell served as president of the convention for two consecutive terms. His writings and ministry offer a representation of the mentality of Southern Baptist pastors during the 1960s. This case study fills a void by examining W.A. Criswell with no intentions to criticize his eschatology or evangelism tactics, but rather to prove that Criswell's conviction during the early Cold War that Jesus Christ would physically return to earth soon is what directed Criswell's ministry.

This paper focuses on the conditions of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the split into fundamentalists and liberals that occurred in the 1960s. It analyzes the sermons and books of W.A. Criswell in order to establish that average Americans were familiar with Cold War terms. This paper discusses Criswell's ministry at the end of the Cold War to show that he was able to adjust his ministry efforts when Armageddon did not occur. It examines the educational efforts of the SBC in order to demonstrate how gripping the fear of the Cold War was.

Criswell's conviction during the early Cold War that the apocalypse was imminent motivated his ministry. W.A. Criswell offers a representation of Southern Baptist ministers and presidents whose actions were compelled by the grim circumstances of the Cold War. The prominence of W.A. Criswell and his congregation allows historians to view his ministry and draw conclusions regarding Southern Baptists as a whole. The fear and imminent doom of the Cold War gripped Criswell, and his distress influenced his ministry throughout the 1960s.

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