

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines  
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24  
 17 | The Resurrection and Consummation

## LOOKING TO THE END, THROUGH JESUS

### Jesus is our Paradigm for the End

- **The Split** - the coming of "the end" happened "to one person in the middle of history in advance of its great, final occurrence, anticipating and guaranteeing the final resurrection of God's people at the end of history." - Wright
- **Q. 56. How is Christ to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world?**  
 A. Christ is to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world, in that he, who was unjustly judged and condemned by wicked men, shall come again at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of his Father's, with all his holy angels, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, to judge the world in righteousness.

### Heaven, or the Intermediate State

WCF 32 - "The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

See 2Cor. 5 & Phil. 1

### The Final Resurrection and Judgment

WCF 32.2 - "At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the **selfsame bodies**, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever.

WCF 33 - "I. God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

**Why?** - WCF 33.2 - "The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord: but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

**When?** - WCF 33.3 - "As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin; and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen."

### **What else do we know about the return of Christ?**

1. One return, not two such that the final day will come without warning!
2. He will come unexpectedly:
  1. He will come DURING a period of distress for the remnant due to the popularity of apostasy among those who profess to be Christian-- (2 Cor. 11:13-5; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Matt. 24:10-2, 24). Therefore, conditions today are the conditions spoken of!
3. Personal and visible coming (Acts 1:11)
4. Cataclysmic Coming (2Pet. 3.10)
5. A Glorious Coming (Matt. 24.30; 2Th. 1.10; Rev. 19.16)

*Note 2Peter 3.8-13 - consider how he draws out the implications of the return*

\*\*\* An Excursus on Millennial Views and Why it Matters\*\*\*

**The Return of Christ—Review of Three major views of Rev. 20.1-6**

**1. Post-millennialism:**

1. Kingdom of God is primarily a present reality.
2. Expect conversion of all nations prior to Christ's return.
3. Expect a long period (not necessarily a literal 1,000 yr. period) of earthly peace and Christian goodness to come gradually.
4. At the end of the millennium there will be a time of apostasy and flare-up of evil in connection with the coming of the antichrist.

**2. Historical Pre-millennialism and Dispensational Pre-millennialism:**

1. Earthly reign of Christ initiated by Christ's return.
2. Earthly millennium will be dramatically and cataclysmically inaugurated by the second coming. (rather than gradual)
3. Great tribulation will immediately precede the millennium, which will heighten the effects of the millennium.
4. Two resurrections in Rev. 20:4-6 are distinguished by the participants (believers in first and non-believers in second) but both are physical or bodily. This over against the Post-mil. and a-mil. that only the second resurrection is bodily whereas the first is spiritual)
5. *Hermeneutic:* *Historical Pre-mil.* are more willing to understand scripture less literally and more figuratively when there is Biblical reason from context. *Dispensational Pre-mil.* almost always reads Bible literalistically. (Note: Rise of Dispensationalism paralleled that of the fundamentalist movement over against the modernist such that "non-literal" falsely came to be equated with "liberal")
6. *Present age:* Unlike Historical Pre-mil, the *Dis. Pre-mil* believe that there is no OT prophecies fulfilled within the "church age" (time between Christ's ascension and Christ's return). *Historical Pre-millennialists* are more willing to understand tribulation and millennium as less literal and in part being accomplished now.
7. *Israel:* Unlike the Hist. Pre-mil, the Disp. hold that there will be a virtual restoration of the Old Testament Israel during the Millennium, some Hist.Pre-mil. only hold that there will be some special status of Israel (non-political/geographical). Therefore, the Disp. look for a political

millennial. Unlike Hist. Pre-mil., the Disp. see a sharp contrast between Israel and the church.

#### 8. ***Tribulation:***

1. *Dis. Pre-millennialism* holds to a two stage return of Christ with a seven year tribulation in between whereby the church will be raptured prior to tribulation.
2. *Historical Pre-millennialism* holds to a one stage return of Christ whereby the church will remain in the world during the tribulation.

#### 9. **Reasons to reject 2 phase view of Christ's return:**

1. Same words are used in scripture to describe what Dispensationalism divides into 2 events. (parousia, 2 Thess.2:8, apokalypsis 1 Cor. 1:7 and epiphaneia 1 Tim. 6:14)
2. When the NT describes the "tribulation" (period of distress), it does not indicate that the church will be removed from the earth before the distress! (note Mt.24 – warning would not even be applicable)
3. All other passages in NT speak of only one coming. Only Rev. 20 can be interpreted to be a 2 phase coming, yet in context that is highly figurative.
4. Therefore, when Christ returns, THAT'S IT.

### 3. **A-millennialism**

1. ***Hermeneutic:*** Like both Post-mil. and Hist. Pre-mil., A-mil. holds that a faithful reading of scripture isn't necessarily a literalistic reading of scripture. The "liberal" / "evangelical" distinctive pertains more to our understanding of God within time and space (supernaturalism vs. anti-supernaturalism), rather than a reading of scripture of literal vs. figurative.
2. ***Millennium:*** Like both Post-mil. and some Hist. Pre-mil., the millennium and tribulation are understood to be symbolic but not necessarily a literal 1,000 year period.
3. ***Present age:*** consists both of the millennial reign of Christ and the tribulation simultaneously. The kingdom of God has come partially now but is not yet fully consummated. The binding of Satan already is taking place for the gospel to have any progress at all but Satan still is the "prince of this world."

4. *Second Coming*: will inaugurate the final age and state for both believers and non-believers. The general resurrection, judgment and consignment of all to their ultimate future states will happen immediately and with no intervening period of time.
5. *Old Testament Prophecy*: fulfilled both within the history of the church and in the New Heaven and Earth.
6. The Lord could return virtually at any time.

**The Kingdom has come! See Matt. 4.17, 10.34.**

- "The kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men, and that this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history and the consummation at the end of history." - George Ladd

**Why does it matter which view you hold? What are common implications?**

**1. Dispensational/fundamentalists**

1. "Underrealized eschatology" - Tend to see the kingdom of God as totally or mainly future. May lead to pessimism about social and personal change. Leads to a "fortress mentality" of pulling out of the world.
  1. Low view of culture: Rather than being agents through which God can exercise his rule in culture (vs. state), we must isolate ourselves from culture, praying and waiting for the return of Christ.
  2. Radical discontinuity between present and future.

**2. Post-Millennialism/Pentecostal**

1. "Overrealized eschatology" - Tends to see the kingdom exclusively as "already" present. Leads to an optimism about the kingdom to breakdown strongholds of corporate or individual evil and forgetting the incompleteness of the kingdom of God.
  1. Leading to a naiveté regarding the sin in the heart, leading them to trust too quickly in the divine origin of their own impulses.
    1. Naiveté regarding church power

2. Expecting "quick and simplistic fixes" for complex problems, leading to a undeveloped view of suffering
  3. Faith as the catch-all solution
- 3. Mainline/liberal (both Pre-mil., Post-mil. and a-mil.)**
1. Tend to negate that the "kingdom" is "from God" rather than from "man"
  2. Confuses "gradual" with "anti-supernatural"
  3. This together with an optimism about the Kingdom being exclusively present, leads to a strong trust in education or politics to usher in the kingdom.
- 4. A-Millennialism**
1. "Realized eschatology" - tension concerning the present and not yet kingdom of God – the present tribulation and reign of Christ in the present age
  2. The tension characterizes what we commonly call the "signs of the times"
    1. Those events (wars, earthquakes, etc.) that must take place before Christ's second return are happening now and will continue.
  3. The people of God are involved in this tension.
  4. **Suffering** - The kingdom of God now includes the use of suffering as a means towards bringing in the future kingdom. Suffering in the lives of believers is a concrete manifestation of the not yet. Acts 14:22 - "*through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God*"
  5. **Culture** - We mustn't equate the kingdom of God with culture, nor should we say that what we do in culture is unrelated to the Kingdom.
    1. There is continuity as well as discontinuity between this world and the next. Grace does not destroy nature but restores it.
  6. **Visible/Invisible?**
    1. Present or future Kingdom of God is not one of invisible or visible, but **impartiality and completeness**, and includes both visible and invisible.
    2. **Now:** Enjoy the rights and privileges of Christ's Laws, government, sacraments and mission as in the visible Church. (albeit imperfect and fallible)
    3. **Not yet:** Consist of "land" and "all peoples"