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Eschatology

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Eschatology:
the study of end times

Although there are different interpretations of prophecy, the common beliefs weld the Church to a united belief that Christ is coming again

Belief in common: Death

- Common reality (Heb 9:27)
- Death only applies to body—soul is eternal (Mt 10:28)
- Death is end of physical life of separation of soul and body (James 2:26)
- Body returns to dust (Gen 3:19)
- Death is “wages” for sin (Rom 6:23; 1 Cor 15:56)
- Life continues through death in one of 2 states (Lk 16:19-31)
  - 2 Cor 5:8, “Absence from body (death) and to be home with the Lord” See also Phil 1:23.

Common belief: Heaven

- One of only 2 destinies of every soul, *ouranos*, “to cover, what is above”
- Three concepts of word:
  - Atmospheric heaven (Gen 1:20), place of birds; (Gen 26:13) place of clouds
  - Celestial heaven—realm of sun, moon, star (Gen 1:14; Deut 17:3)
  - Dwelling place of God, “third heaven” (2 Cor 12:2; Mt 6:9; Isa 66:1)
    - Though omnipresent, but only here Shekinah glory illuminates
    - It is a place, not a state (Jn 6:38)
    - It is a prepared place (Jn 14:2-3), a “paradise” (Lk 23:43)
    - OT, “gathered to his people” (Gen 25:8), suggest immortality
    - Moses and Elijah came from God’s presence for Transfiguration (Mt 17)

Common belief: New Jerusalem

- Old heaven and old earth renovated by fire (2 Pet 3:10) because of angelic and human rebellion against God
- Home of redeemed of all ages
- Intimate fellowship with God (Rev 20:3-4)
- Description:
  - Walled: suggests security (21:12-13)
  - Foundation stones (21:14), names of apostles suggests the church is present
  - Measurements (21:15-18): 1500 cubic miles
  - Adornment (21:19-21): brilliant stones to reflect Shekinah glory
  - Availability (21:22): direct access
  - Purpose (21:24-26): eternal dwelling place of believers

Common beliefs: Hell

- Sheol (OT): 65x with a variety of meanings:
  - Grave (Job 17:13; Ps 16:10; Isa 38:10)
  - Place of dead: good and bad (Gen 37:35; 42:38; Job 14:13; Ps 55:15)
  - Believers rescued from Sheol (Ps 16:9-11; 17:15; 49:13)
- Hades – 10x
  - LXX translation from Sheol, name of god of nether world of dead
  - Inter-testament period developed the 2 compartment theory (Persian Zoroastrianism influence)
  - Used in two ways: (1) Place when referring to punishment; (2) state of death where all must go (7x) (Mt 16:18; Acts 2:27, 31)
- Gehenna – 12x
  - Designation for eternal punishment
  - Place of continual burning in Valley of Hinnon, where infants sacrificed to Molech (2 Ki 16:3)
  - Punishment connected with final judgment

Common beliefs: Hell[2]

- *Tartaroo* – 1x (2 Pet 2:4)
  - Used in classical mythology for subterranean abyss where rebellious gods are punished
- Abyss – 7x in NAS
  - Meaning "bottomless"
  - Prison of demons (Lk 8:31; Rev 9:1-2, 11)
  - Satan is king over demons of abyss (Rev 9:11)
  - Release of demons in Tribulation (Rev. 9:1)
  - Satan bound here for 1000 yrs (Rev 20:1-3)
- Other terms
  - "Unquenchable fire" (Mt 3:12); "Furnace of fire" (Mt 13:42,50)
  - "Eternal fire" (Mt 25:41)
  - "Lake of fire" (Rev 19:20); "Lake that burns w/fire" (Rev 21:8)
  - "Outer darkness" (Mt 8:12; 22:13)

Common belief: Return of Christ +300x in NT

- Christ taught return would be literal, physical event (Acts 1:11)
- Hope in reality of event would be a comfort (Jn 14:1-3)
- Unknown time (Mt 24:36, 42; 25:1-13)
- In His absence everyone should be faithful stewards (Mt 24:45-51)
- Anticipating the reward for faithfulness (Mt 24:14-30)
- Bodies of believers transformed w/o dying at His return (1 Th 4:13-18)
- True understanding of this doctrine will motivate purity (1 Jn 3:3) and “holy conduct” (2 Pet 3:11)

Common belief: Resurrection of Dead

- OT: David spoke of awakening in God's presence (Ps 17:15)
  - Asaph had faith that God would receive him in heaven (Ps 73:24-25)
  - Isaiah 26:19; Dan 12:1-2
- NT: Jesus said Sadducees denied it because of lack of understanding Scripture and power of God (Mt 22:29; Mk 12:24-27)
  - Jesus is not only eternal life, but resurrection (Jn 11:25-26)
  - Paul explains it as foundation of faith (1 Cor 15:17)
  - The heart of NT preaching (Acts 2:31; 4:2, 33; 17:18,32; 23:6, 8; 24:15, 21)
  - Told to remember resurrection truth (2 Tim 2:8)

Common belief: Judgments

- Right must be rectified and wrong, punished, or justice doesn't exist anywhere!
- God's judgment is fair and according to truth (Rom 2:2)
- Historical judgment:
  - Lucifer and fallen angels judged (2 Pet 2:4)
  - Flood judged Noah's generation (Gen 6-7)
  - Israel judged by Assyria (2 Kings 17:1-6); Judah, by Babylon (2 Kings 25:1-12)
  - Ananias and Sapphira judged in NT (Acts 5:1-11)
  - Ungodliness is judged now (Rom 1:18)
- Jesus has authority to judge (Jn 5:27-29)

Common belief: Judgments[2]

- Amount of knowledge of truth a factor (Mt 11:24)
- All will be judged (Heb 9:27)– Note: death is not judgment (JW)
- A record is kept of all works of every human (Rev 20:4-15; see also Ps 139:16; Phil 4:17)
- Objective of unbeliever's judgment is just cause for condemnation (Rev 20:15)
- Objective of believer's judgment is just cause for Praise from God (1 Cor 4:5)
  - 2 Cor 5:10– "good or bad", *kakos*, "worthless, useless"
- Rewards given are worth any suffering in this life (Ro 8:18)

Common belief: Eternal State in Hell

- “Weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30)
- In Mt 25:46 “eternal” modifies “punishment” and “life”
- Destiny of devil and false prophet (Rev 20:10)
- Just punishment means degrees of affliction (Lk 12:47-48)
- Aspects: 1) Total absence of God’s favor, 2) Endless consequences of damnation of sin, 3) Serious pain and suffering in body and soul, 4) Subjective punishment from anguish, regret, despair, conscience, bitterness, anger (Mk 9:43-44; 47-48; Lk 16:23, 28; Rev 14:10; 21:8)

Common belief: Eternal State in Hell

- Eternal fellowship in Christ's company (Jn 14:2)
- Pictured as a banquet (Mt 8:11)
- Inhabitants in New Jerusalem (Heb 12:22-24): 1) angels , 2) NT believers, "first-born", God, OT saints-"those made righteous" and Jesus
- A literal place with specific dimensions
- Where God dwells in fellowship with man (Rev 21:3, "among", *meta,* "in close association with"
- No sorrow nor cause for sorrow (Rev 21:4,5)
- Believers see him face to face (Rev 22:4)

Controversies: 3 major views: amillennial, postmillennial and premillennial

Amillennial: Reform eschatology (Liberal, RCC), Allegorical hermeneutics

- A- ("no") + millennium: kingdom is present church age
  - "*Realized millennium*": everything fulfilled in church
  - Interprets Revelation by *Progressive Parallelism*.
    - 1-3 events of 1st Century
    - 4-7 Church in trial and persecution
    - 8-11 Church avenged and protected
    - 12-14 Birth of Christ and Satanic opposition
    - 15-16 God's wrath on unrepentant opposition
    - 17-19 Final fall of forces of secularism
    - 20-22 Triumph & Final doom of enemies of Church and godlessness

Amillennial Second Coming of Christ

- A single event with signs
- Calling of gentiles to fulfill “fullness of Gentiles”
- Conversion of Israel (Rom 11:26 = “all Israel” = elect from Israel
- Great apostasy and tribulation (Mat 24:9-12, 21-24)
- Revelation of antichrist
- Signs and wonders
- His coming will introduce future eternal age

Amillennium Final Events

- Resurrection of the dead
  - Believers and unbelievers resurrected simultaneously (Dan 12:2; Jn 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Rev 20:13-15)
  - Ocurrs at the 2nd Coming (1 Cor 15:23; Phil 3:20-21; 1 Th 4:16) at "last day"
- Final Judgment: a general judgment for all
  - To display God's sovereignty and glory
  - To reveal to all the degrees of reward and punishment
  - To execute God's judgment on everyone at once
    - Note: no distinction between Judgment Seat of Christ and Great White Throne Judgment
- Renewal of present creation (Mat 19:28)

Postmillennium

- Held by major theologians of 1800-1900s: Hodge, Shedd, Warfield, Strong
- WWI and WWII destroyed optimism
- Definition: "The view of the last things which holds that the Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the 'Millennium'"
  - Enns, Paul, The Moody Handbook of Theology, (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press) 1996.

Postmillennium: Millennium

- Nature of Millennium: Similar to present time, but sin reduced due to influence of Gospel
- Progress of Gospel which spreads to ends of earth (Isa 49:6; Ps 2:8; 47:2-8; 72:7-11; 86:9; 110:1). Zech 9:10, “from sea to sea”
- Progress in society: slavery abolished, disease control, scientific advances and Disarmament are seen as symptoms of millennium beginning

Postmillennium: Second Coming

- Returns AFTER millennium to reward servants
- Instead of getting worse, world will get better
- Missions and revival are key to Second Coming
- Gospel progress prior to 2nd Coming in Dan 2:44-45; Mt 13:31-32; 24:14; Col 1:23
- Literal return (Acts 1:11)

Postmillennium:

- **Resurrection**: In general agreement with Amillennialists: a single general resurrection of everyone simultaneously
- **Final Judgment**: agree with Amillennialists: a General Judgment of everyone simultaneously, according to the light received (Lk 12:47-48)
- **Eternal State**
  - Final disposition of believers and unbelievers to an unalterable eternal state between the presence of God and everlasting punishment
  - Heaven is this world renovated

Historical Premillennialism: Post-Tribulation rapture

George Ladd (Fuller Theo. Sem) and J. Barton Payne

- Interpret Rev. 1-19 as Amillennialism, i.e. Church Age; then ref to millennium is taken literal
- Based on "spiritualizing hermeneutic" to equate Israel and the Church.
  - Contend that a literal hermeneutic is not necessary.
  - OT references to Israel occasionally applied to Church in NT (Rom 9:25-26 with Hos 1:9, 10; 2:23) (Jer 31:33-34 w/ Heb 8)
- Admit to a literal future for national Israel (Rom 11:26)

Historical Premillennialism: Tribulation

- Since no distinction between Church and Israel, church goes through Tribulation
- Argument for Church in Tribulation:
  - PostTribulationalism is suppose to be historical position of Early Church (Walvood disagrees)
  - Church in Trib. will suffer trial and persecution, but not the wrath of God
  - No distinct resurrection of NT and OT believers
  - "Blessed Hope" is not secret rapture, but the resurrection at 2nd Coming
  - Church includes believers of all ages, even from Tribulation Period (Rev 7:14)

Historical Premillennialism: Second coming and Millennium

- Second Coming
  - At 2nd Coming (Rev 19:6-10) Marriage Fiest of Lamb
  - Christ conquers enemies, sends Beast and False Prophet to Lake of Fire (19:20); Devil bound for 1000 yrs (20:2-3), then relased 1000 yrs later (20:10)
  - "First resurrection" is bodily resurrection of all saints (20:4-5); unbelievers at end of millennium
- Millennium
  - Christ has invisible kingdom now from heaven as Messianic King (1 Cor 15:24; 1 Tim 6:15) and later has visible kingdom from New Jerusalem

Dispensational Premillennialism

- Two basic features
  - God has distinct programs for Israel and Church
  - A consistent literal interpretation is maintained (grammatical-historical-linguistic hermeneutic)
- Beliefs:
  - Church is raptured before Tribulation (1 Th 4:13-18)
  - God will judge unbelieving Jews and Gentiles in Tribulation (Rev. 6-19)
  - Christ returns at end of Tribulation to establish millennial reign
  - Following end of 1000 yr reign Satan loosed for final rebellion (20:7-10)
  - Eternal state follows Great White Throne Judgment

Dispensational Premillennialism

- Church Fathers and early evidence of view:

  Didache (100); Clement of Rome (96-97); Shepherd of Hermas (140-150); Ignatius of Antioch (50-115); Papias (80-163); Justin Martyr (100); Iranaeus (200); Tertullian (150-225)

- Interpretation: Reason for distinction between Israel and church
  - "Israel" always refers to nation of Israel (Gal 6:16, "even")
  - Israel distinct from Church (Rom 9:6; 1 Co 10:32)
  - Israel has unconditional promises in OT to be fulfilled in millennium
  - Church is distinct entity born at Pentecost (1 Cor 12:13); nowhere mentioned or prophecized in OT (Eph 3:9)
  - Church only exists from Pentecost to Rapture (1 Th 4:13-18)
  - Purpose of Tribulation is to judge Gentiles and Jews (Jer 30:7): Church has no purpose there.

Dispensational Premillennialism

- ***Nature*** of Tribulation: outpouring of wrath for 7 yrs (Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1)
- ***Scope*** of Tribulation: whole earth involved (Isa 24:1-6, 21; 34:2) and chastisement of Israel (Jer 30:7; Dan 9:24)
- ***Purpose*** of Tribulation: to judge people on earth (Rev 6:10; 11:10; 13:8,12,14; 14:6; 17:8)—To prepare Israel for her king (Ezeq 36:18-32; Mal 4:5-6)
- ***Unity*** of Tribulation: fulfills 70th Week of Daniel 9:24
- ***Exemption*** of Tribulation: Church is object of Christ's love, not wrath (Eph 5:25)—Promised absence from wrath (Rom 5:9)
- ***Sequel*** of Tribulation: signs of Mt 24 given to Israel to know approximate coming; rapture is w/o warning

Tribulation Period in Dan 9:27

- One week = 7 days/years – 70 weeks = 490 yr
- 69 weeks (483 yrs) already fulfilled from Declaration to Return to Jerusalem (444 BC) from Babylon until the "cut off" of Messiah in 33 AD = 483 yrs
- 70th Week remains unfulfilled (Dan 9:24, "decreed for your people")
- In Mt 24-25 Jesus described Tribulation to NATION of Israel.
- Will begin with signing of Covenant with Beast who promises to protect Israel
- Sequence of Seals, Trumpets, Bowl-judgments describe the event climaxing with the Return of Christ (Rev 19:11-21)

Judgment Seat of Christ

- Nothing here about eternal destiny
- Bema seat taken from Grecian games where athletes rewarded for victories
  - Deeds evaluated for motive (Mat 6) and usefulness (2 Cor 5:10, “bad” = “useless”)
  - If deeds are genuine there is a reward: 1 Cor 9:25; 1 Th 2:19
- Rewards occur before 2nd Coming, since Bride is rewarded when returning with Christ (Rev 19:8)

Marriage of the Lamb

- Marriage of Christ and Church occurs in heaven prior to 2nd Coming (Rev 19:7)
- Marriage Supper refers to Israel and occurs on earth at beginning of Millennial kingdom

2nd Coming of Christ

- Christ returns physically to earth (Zech 14:4)
- Then Christ will judge and inaugurate millennial kingdom (Zech 14:9-21)
- OT and Tribulation saints raised to inherit kingdom (Rev 20:4)
- OT and Tribulation saints raised to inherit kingdom (Mt 25:1-13)
- Saved Jews will enter into Kingdom (Mt 25:21): Unsaved cast into *outer darkness* (Mt 25:30)
- Unbelieving Gentiles judged at Valley of Jehoshaphat (Kidron Valley; Zech 4:4) regarding their treatment of Jews (Joel 3:2; Mt 25:40)

Millennial Kingdom

- Unconditional covenants demand a literal fulfillment
- Conditions describe a perfect environment physically and spiritually

  Peace (Mic 4:2-4); Joy (Isa 61:7,10); Comfort (Isa 40:1-2); No poverty (Amos 9:13-15); No sickness (Isa 35:5-6); Fullness of Spirit (Joel 2:28-29); Christ is King (Isa 9:3-7; 11:1-10); Nobles and governors will rule (Isa 32:1; Mt 19:28; Lk 19:17); Jerusalem is center of world (Zech 8:3); Topographical changes in Israel (Zech 14:4, 8, 10);
- Resurrection of unbelieving dead at end of Millennium and judged at Great While Throne Judgment

  –Condemned cast into the Lake of Fire (20:10) as final abode