

The Bible's Teaching On Jesus' Second Coming

Study Notes

Eschatology

- The part of theology concerned with death, judgment, and the final destiny of the soul and of humankind.
- The word derives from two Greek roots meaning "last" (ἔσχατος) and "study" (-λογία) – involves **the study of "end things", whether of the end of an individual life, of the end of the age, of the end of the world, or of the nature of the Kingdom of God.**
- A note on the state of those who die prior to Christ's return: There is no "crossing over" from eternal life (or death) to this creation (Luke 16:26-31). Further, there is no Scriptural basis for assuming that those in heaven have any knowledge of particular things and happenings on earth (Isaiah 63:16).

The Second Coming of Christ (views based on particular passages without context)

Millennialism

- The teaching of a physical reign of the Church on earth for 1,000 years with or without the physical presence of Christ. Christ will return at the beginning (premillennialism) or at the end (postmillennialism) of this period.
- Also called chiliasm (chiloi = 1,000).
- Based on a literal interpretation of Revelation 20:1-7, as well as one apocryphal reference from between the OT and NT (2 Esdras 7:28), which refers to the Messiah bringing 400 years of happiness to "all who survive". Other apocryphal books picked up on this theme which was universally condemned by all ancient Church leaders. The view became more popular at the beginning of each new millennium.
- Zechariah 12:10 is used as evidence that Israel will acknowledge the Saviour.
- Some think of the period as a physical kingdom, some as a spiritual kingdom – either involves a period of peace and joy wherein the Gospel permeates the earth and the Jews come to faith.

Rapture

- The teaching that believers are taken from earth and others are left behind with an opportunity to repent (Matthew 24:36-42).

The "Whole-Bible" View

- When interpreting Scripture, one must not base theology on single references, especially when taken out of context.
- The immediate context then flows into the context of all of God's Word – so that the less clear is informed by what is absolutely plain.
- Examples from Revelation chapter 7, 12, and 13.
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 pictures the age of the Church (the last days – Hebrews 1:1-2).
- Revelation 16 as a further image of the age of the Church (the last days).

- Israel (OT and NT) refers to the Church, not to a political entity. The Israel of today has little if anything to do with the Israel of the Bible (Romans 9:1-8).
- Christ's coming brings immediate judgement and salvation or damnation:
 1. Matthew 25:31-46
 2. Matthew 16:27 ("then" = "at that moment")
 3. Acts 1:9, 11
 4. To all people at once and when least expected (Matthew 24:27, 30, 44 and Luke 17:24)
 5. As a "thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2)
 6. Comes to bring salvation (Hebrews 9:26-28)
 7. Comes as judge (Matthew 25)
 8. Comes at a time that is known only to the Father (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32)
- The signs of the end revealed in Scripture:
 1. Include abnormal conditions or disturbances in the social world (wars, hostility, etc.), in the natural world (earthquakes, floods, unusual activity in the heavens), and in the Church (false teachers, "itching ear" teachings, antichrist – 1 John 2:18, falling away from the Gospel).
 2. These negative experiences are viewed by Christians as reminders of a positive event: Christ's return (Luke 21:28).
 3. The Christian will also be "singled out" (Matthew 24:9), as has happened and continues to happen at an accelerating rate (martyrdom – the most extreme example of this – is increasingly common around the world).
 4. Matthew 24:37ff also indicates the perceived "irrelevance" of God and the Gospel message in the last days. Within the Church, as superficial attitude takes hold.
 5. Matthew 24:14 describes a criterion that will precede the end.
 6. These signs and more from Scripture make it clear that Christ's return is possible at any time.
- Fictitious Signs of Judgement Day:
 1. Millennialism teaches a fictitious earthly kingdom of Christ – some even teach that this will include carnal delights for the "faithful". This also teaches a twofold return of Christ (usually connected with a rule in Jerusalem and the Holy Land) and a twofold resurrection of the dead. Neither has support in Scripture.
 2. The usual support passages for this false view are: Isaiah 2:2-4, 11:6-9, Zechariah 9:9-10, Joel 2:23ff, 3:18ff, Micah 4:1-4 and Revelation 20.
 3. However, if we let Scripture interpret itself we also gain clarity from: Hebrews 12:22, John 14:27, 16:33, the angels' song at Bethlehem of "Peace on Earth", Philippians 4:7, Ephesians 6:15. All these reveal that God's peace comes with Christ's victory now, not in some imagined earthly kingdom. Further, the cause of peace in Isaiah 9 is given as the birth of the Saviour, not some future earthly rule. The same holds with the prophecy of the Saviour in Isaiah 11. Joel's words find fulfillment at Pentecost as Peter explicitly states in Acts 2. James, at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:13ff), explicitly describes the Gospel's work among the Gentiles as fulfillment of Amos and Joel. Finally, the reigning of Christ in Revelation 20 takes place in heaven – not on earth!
 4. Revelation 20:4-6 clearly defines the first resurrection as coming to faith and the second as a literally resurrection from physical death. Further, Satan has been bound in Jesus'

victorious resurrection (John 16:33, 1 Peter 4:6, John 12:31, 16:11, Acts 26:17, Colossians 1:13-14).

5. Thus, the 1,000 years plus the “little season” (Revelation 20) encompass the age of the Church from Pentecost to the last day. This view is described as “**amillennial**”. The little season involves direct opposition to the message of salvation by Grace through Christ alone.
 6. Summary of Chiliasm’s false teachings: twofold return of Christ (Hebrews 9:28), twofold resurrection of the dead (John 6:40), a hope centered on some earthly kingdom (Philippians 3:20-21, Luke 17:21).
- The General Conversion of the Jews
 1. Romans 11:25-32, the usual proof for a Jewish national conversion misses the point that in that chapter of Romans Paul defines “Israel” as “Church”. Those who live by faith are saved. There is nothing new here!
 2. “All Israel” parallels “the fullness of the Gentiles”.
 3. Faith, not ancestry, is at issue.
 4. Chapters 9 and 10 of Romans explicitly point to this truth. See also Romans 11:1-6.
 - The Resurrection of the Dead
 1. Although humanity typically refers to some sort of afterlife when it is helpful to do so (when mourning a death or considering one’s own death), it often ridicules the truth of the Bible on the subject (1 Corinthians 15:35, Acts 17:32).
 2. Both OT and NT clearly teach and assume the resurrection of the dead (John 5:28-29, 6:39-40, Mark 12:18-27, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 1:9, 5:10, Matthew 22:29, Job 19:26, etc.). Also clear from these passages is what is resurrected is that which is in the grave, i.e., their physical body.
 - The Final Judgement
 1. Involves all people and is connected to Christ’s visible return and the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 25).
 2. “Good works” are, by definition, an expression of faith in Christ. That is the basis upon which their value is measured – as an indication of trust in Christ or lack thereof (Matthew 25:35-40, John 3:18, 5:24). Because the believers have forgiveness in Christ, their normal state is that of being forgiven, not of living under the law. The preaching of the law to believers (we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ) is meant only to drive the believer to the Gospel and to a natural outpouring of thanksgiving and living in trust.
 - The End of the World
 1. This creation is renewed, transformed, or totally remade to be without sin (Romans 8:21). Most Lutheran theologians assume a total destruction of the substance of this sinful creation and a replacement with a new creation. If it is a transformation, the very substance of creation is itself transformed.
 - Eternal Damnation
 1. The essence of this state is that of absolute separation from God, in whom life, love, and all good exists (Matthew 25:41). Humankind is made for communion with God and when this communion is absolutely broken, hell is the resultant state.
 - Eternal Life

1. More is involved than the immortality of the soul; eternal life involves a resurrected body as well (1 John 3:2).
2. Negatively, heaven will consist in perfect freedom from every evil (2 Timothy 4:18, Revelation 7:16-17, 21:4). Positively, it will consist in believers being filled with unimaginable bliss (1 Peter 1:8, Psalm 16:11, John 17:24).
3. The body will be a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44), similar to the resurrected, glorified body of Christ.
4. There are no degrees of bliss: heaven is heaven; but the Bible does speak of degrees of glory (2 Corinthians 9:6ff, Daniel 12:3ff).