

Systematic Theology, Lesson 35: Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things, Part 1

1. Introduction to Eschatology

- a. Purpose of eschatology: Eschatology is not an end in itself but should stimulate _____ . “The function of eschatology, rightly understood, is to stimulate virtue, not satisfy curiosity.”¹
- i. **Col 1:4-5**: since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel.
 - ii. **1 Pet 1:3-6**: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.
 - iii. **1 John 3:2-3**: Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

b. Structure of eschatology

i. Two ages

1. The Bible understands history to unfold in two ages: the present age and the age to come.
 - a. **Matt 12:32**: Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.
 - b. **Mark 10:30**: but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and

¹ Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 76.

sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

- c. **Luke 18:29-30:** And He [Jesus] said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time [i.e., the present age] and in the age to come, eternal life.”

2. Present age characteristics

- a. It is an age of marriage. **Luke 20:34:** Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, . . .”
- b. It is an age believers are not to be conformed to. **Rom 12:2:** And do not be conformed to this world [=age], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
- c. It is an age of _____ wisdom. **2 Cor 2:6-8:** Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
- d. It is an age in which Satan has blinded _____. **2 Cor 4:4:** in whose case the god of this world [=age] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- e. It is an evil age. **Gal 1:4:** who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.
- f. It is an age dominated by _____. **Eph 2:1-2:** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world

[=age], according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

- g. It is an age believers should live uprightly in. **Titus 2:12:** instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.
- h. It is an age ruled by Jesus Christ. **Eph 1:20-21:** which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.
- i. It is an age characterizing _____ on those who receive the gospel. **Mark 10:29-30:** Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life."

3. Age to come characteristics

- a. It is an age of no marriage and no _____. **Luke 20:35-36:** but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age [i.e., age to come] and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.
- b. It is an _____ age. **Mark 10:30:** but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.
- c. It is an age ruled by Christ. **Eph 1:20-21:** which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and

every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

- d. It is an age of true, abundant life. **1 Tim 6:17-19**: Instruct those who are rich in this present world [=age] not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

ii. Overlap of the two ages

1. From an Old Testament perspective, the “age to come” included many eschatological expectations:
 - a. Coming Redeemer (**Gen 3:15; 22:18; 49:10; 2 Sam 7:12-13; Isa 7:14; 53; Dan 7:13-14**).
 - b. Kingdom of God (**Dan 2:44-45; 7:13-14**).
 - c. New Covenant (**Jer 31:31-34**).
 - d. Restoration of Israel (**Jer 23:3; Isa 11:11; Eze 36:24-28**).
 - e. Outpouring of the Spirit (**Joel 2:28-32**).
 - f. Day of the Lord (**Obad 15-16; Isa 13:6-8; Amos 5:18; Zeph 1:14-15**).
 - g. New heavens and earth (**Isa 65:17; 66:22**).
2. From a New Testament perspective, eschatological events have happened, but there is yet more to come.
 - a. The _____ has come!
 - i. **Matt 1:20-23**: But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus,

for He will save His people from their sins.” Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.”

- ii. **Heb 10:12:** but He [Jesus], having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

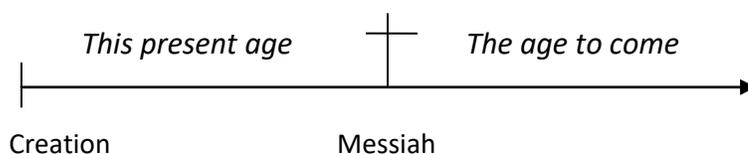
b. Fulfillment is in part now

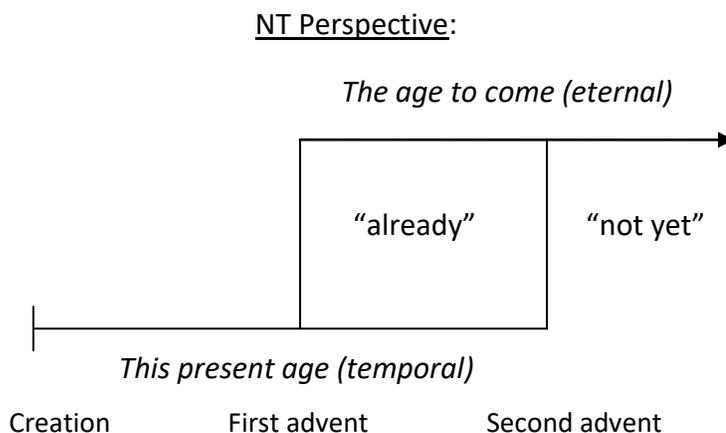
- i. **Gal 4:4-5:** But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
- ii. **Mark 1:15:** [Jesus] saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

c. Yet there is more to come (e.g., the _____ and earth).

d. Therefore, what was once thought to be one movement (in the Old Testament) is seen to be in two movements (in the New Testament): this age and the age to come.

OT Perspective:





3. We currently live in the _____ of the two ages (between Christ’s two advents). This is sometimes referred to as “already/not yet.”
- a. Pneumatology is already/not yet: we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and will one day be sealed.
 - i. **2 Cor 1:22:** who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.
 - ii. **Eph 4:30:** Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
 - b. Salvation is already/not yet: we are saved yet we will be saved.²
 - i. **John 3:36:** He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.
 - ii. **Heb 9:28:** so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.

² For more on the different tenses of salvation, see: Dan Burrus, “Systematic Theology, Lesson 28: Soteriology, Part 6,” lecture available at gracelakeville.org.

- c. The kingdom of God is already/not yet: the kingdom is here, yet the kingdom is future.
- i. **Matt 3:2:** Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
 - ii. **Col 1:13:** For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.
 - iii. **Matt 8:11-12:** I [Jesus] say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline *at the table* with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - iv. **2 Tim 4:18:** The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.
- d. The overlap of the ages includes the timeframe labeled as “ _____ ” in the Scripture.
- i. **Acts 2:16-17:** but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: “AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,” God says, “THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS.”
 - ii. **2 Tim 3:1:** But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.
 - iii. **Heb 1:2:** in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.
 - iv. Note: “last day” (singular) is not the same thing as “last days” (plural). “Last day” (singular) refers a future day to come (e.g., **John 6:39; 11:24; 12:48**).

e. Sometimes the “already/not yet” framework is called “inaugurated eschatology.”

iii. Concluding observations:

1. The entire structure of the Bible is dominated and permeated with eschatology. We cannot, therefore, strictly regulate the study of eschatology to _____ events.
2. Doctrines such as Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, etc. cannot be understood apart from an eschatological framework.
3. The overlap of the ages involves _____ between the “already” and “not yet” in which we currently live.

c. Division of (future) eschatology: Eschatology is divided into two major sections: personal eschatology and general eschatology.

i. Personal (or individual) eschatology

1. Physical death
2. Intermediate state

ii. General (or cosmic) eschatology

1. Return of Christ (second advent)
2. Millennium
3. Resurrection
4. Judgment and eternal punishment
5. New heavens and earth (eternal state)