



new creation teaching ministry: tuesday night studies 2009

the things we firmly believe

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Study 21: Christ and Eschatology

Christ and Prophecy

1. Christ is the substance of Old Testament prophecy with eschatological implications:

(a) the 'seed', God with us:

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Galatians 3:16

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

(b) King and Messiah: Psalm 2

(c) Lord: Psalm 110

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

2 The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies. 3 Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth.

4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath. 6 He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth. 7 He will drink from a brook beside the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

(d) Servant: Isaiah 53

(e) Prophet: Deuteronomy 18

2. Christ is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy

This is done in his birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension.

Christ is also bringing his work to its fulfilment at the end of the age:

Hebrews 10:12-14, Philippians 2:9-11, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

'In passing we may note that the Lord at the right hand of God intercedes for his own, so that they need not fear the present, nor – for that matter – the future. It is his present reigning which is the source of so much powerful hope for the present and the future. That the future is in his hands is powerful comfort for his people.'¹

¹ *The Things We Firmly Believe*, p260

Christ the Lord of the future

All authority is given to Jesus - Ps 110, Ps 2.

Jesus will ultimately have the eternal kingdom (Isaiah 9:6-11, 11:1ff, Jeremiah 23:5-6).

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. 28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

There is fulfilment of prophecy in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, yet he is still to complete the work at the end of the ages.

Christ's view of the future

Jesus may have seen himself as 'eschatology in the process of realisation'. He understood that the kingdom of God had, in some sense, already come. At the same time he spoke of eschatological events still to come.² The phrase 'already and not yet' is often used.

Some points to keep in mind:

1. Read the gospel prophecies within the context and style.
2. 'The heart of eschatology is not when or what but who, not a schedule or a plan but a person. The Gospels move us to contemplate the future not by giving us a blueprint but by relating all to Jesus, Messiah and Son of man.'³

Mark

The coming of Jesus started the time of fulfilment of end time prophesy (1:14-15) i.e. the period of time between the crucifixion and the Parousia (Jesus' coming again) is the 'End Times'.

Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection meant that the eschatological tribulation (a time of trial and difficulty) and the general resurrection had started.

There are significant correlations between Mark 13 (the end of the age) and Mark 14-15 (the end of Jesus), highlighting that Jesus' end belongs to the end times.

E.g. 15:33 darkness at crucifixion, 13:24 darkness at the end, 15:38 temple veil torn, 13:2 temple destroyed.

There will be:

- false prophets (13:5-6)
- wars, earthquakes and famines (13:7-8)
- suffering for the faithful (13:9-13)
- judgement sent on Jerusalem (13:14-23)
- great signs in the heavens (13:24-25)
- the appearing of Jesus to affect the end (13:26-27)

Matthew

Very close to Mark's views (Mark 13 and Matthew 24).

There are 2 events spoken of in Mark 13 and Matthew 24:

1. judgement of Jerusalem
2. Parousia – the ultimate coming of the Messiah

Both these events are intertwined in these passages and it can be complicated to work out what belongs to which event.

² J. Green, S. McKnight, I. Marshall, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p206, (IVP: Leicester, 1992).

³ *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p209.

OT quotes make clear that Jesus fulfilled the messianic expectations of Judaism.
Jesus' resurrection was the beginning of the general resurrection (Matthew 27:51-53).

Luke

Eschatology is not as clear as in Mark and Matthew, not as much a focus of Luke's.

John

More spiritual focus but still very real (18:33-38).

John very much associated Jesus with end time themes. When Jesus came, eschatological hopes (themes) were realised.

The death of Jesus is 'the judgement of this world' (12:30-33).

The Son of man already has authority (5:27), already judges (9:35-39, 12:30-33), already lifted up and exalted (3:14)

Jesus has gone to the Father, prepares for the coming of the saints and will return (14:1-3, 16:7-15, 21:22, 17 and 14:1)

There will be a last day, with resurrection (6:39-40, 5:29-29).

Timing in the Gospels

When would these events take place? There is no certainty in any of the gospels as to when. Some may have expected events to unfold sooner rather than later, others perhaps had a longer term view. John doesn't mention time at all. What is certain is that the timing is unknown (Acts 1:7 "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.")

Summary

What we can say is that when those signs appear, the end is yet to come. It is the beginning of sufferings for the faithful ones.

What are the events about? Suffering, facing death. Why?

'The sufferings of Jesus and of his church together constitute the labour pains after which the new world comes.'⁴

God triumphs through suffering at the hand of evil.

We see the same principle in Revelation – evil powers are given authority to work forms of suffering (cf Job). Out of suffering comes the Kingdom. This was well known by the prophets.

Micah 4:9-10

9 Why do you now cry aloud- have you no king?

Has your counselor perished, that pain seizes you like that of a woman in labor?

10 Write in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor,

for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field.

You will go to Babylon; there you will be rescued.

There the LORD will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies.

'Out of this suffering the true people of God will be born and matured'⁵.

⁴ *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p207.

⁵ *The Things We Firmly Believe*, p264.