

Systematic Theology, Lesson 37: Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things, Part 3

1. Review

- a. Purpose of eschatology: Eschatology is not an end in itself but should stimulate growth in Christ.
- b. Division of 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)

2. Return of Christ (Second Advent)

- a. Expectation of Christ's return: The New Testament is full of accounts of the _____ of the return of Christ, his second advent. Thus, central to "general eschatology" is the return of Christ.
 - i. **Matt 16:27:** For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.
 - ii. **Mark 14:62:** And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."
 - iii. **John 14:3:** If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

- iv. **1 Cor 4:5:** Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.
- v. **1 Pet 5:4:** And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- vi. **1 John 2:28:** Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.
- vii. **Rev 22:20:** He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
- viii. In addition to these verses (and many more that we don't have time to mention), several chapters in the Bible are devoted to Christ's second coming: **Matthew 13, 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21** and even the majority of some New Testament books: **1 and 2 Thessalonians** and **Revelation**.

b. Nature of Christ's return

i. A _____ coming

1. **Acts 1:11:** They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."
2. **Phil 3:20:** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. **Col 3:4:** When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.
4. **2 Tim 4:8:** in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

ii. A _____ coming

1. **Rev 1:7:** BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.
2. **Titus 2:11-13:** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.
3. **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.

iii. A _____ coming

1. **Matt 24:30:** And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.
2. **Mark 8:38:** For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.
3. **2 Thess 1:10:** on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

c. Timing of Christ's return

i. The timing of Christ's return is _____.

1. **Matt 24:36, 44:** But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. . . . For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.
2. **Mark 13:32-33:** But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father *alone*. Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time will come.

3. **Luke 12:40:** You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.
4. **1 Thess 5:2:** or you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.
5. **2 Pet 3:10a:** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, . . .

ii. The timing of Christ's return is _____.

1. **Rom 13:11-12:** *Do* this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
2. **Heb 10:37:** FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.
3. **Jam 5:8-9:** You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.
4. **1 Pet 4:7:** The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.
5. **Matt 16:28:** Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (c.f., **Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27**).

iii. The timing of Christ's return is _____.

1. **Matt 24:14:** This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.
2. **Mark 13:7:** When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be frightened; *those things* must take place; but that is not yet the end.
3. **Matt 25:5:** Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep.

4. **Matt 25:19:** Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.
5. **2 Pet 3:3-4, 8-9:** Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” . . . But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

iv. Signs of the times

1. Misunderstanding about the signs of the times.¹
 - a. The signs of the times refer exclusively to the _____ immediately before Christ’s return and have nothing to do with the centuries before Christ’s return.
 - i. **Matt 16:1-3:** The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He replied to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘*It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.*’ And in the morning, ‘*There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.*’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot *discern* the signs of the times?”
 - ii. **Matt 24:1-2:** Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”
 - b. The signs of the times are abnormal, catastrophic, and spectacular events _____.

¹ These three misunderstandings are adapted from Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 129-33.

- i. **Luke 17:20-21:** Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here *it is!*’ or, ‘There *it is!*’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”
- ii. **2 Thess 2:9:** *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders.
- c. The signs of the times are meant to date the _____ of Christ’s return. But as we have already seen above, the Scriptures are clear that the timing of Christ’s return is unknown. In fact, Christ condemned such attempts at dating (**Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32**).

2. Purpose of the signs of the times

- a. To increase our _____ of Christ’s return, not to predict the exact date.
 - i. **Matt 24:42:** Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.
 - ii. **Luke 21:28:** But when these things begin to take place [i.e., the signs of the times], straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.
- b. To keep us from going astray and following false messiahs.
 - i. **Mark 13:5-6, 21:** And Jesus began to say to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am *He!*’ and will mislead many.” . . . “And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, *He is there!*’; do not believe *him.*”

3. What are the signs of the times?

- a. The proclamation of the gospel to all nations (**Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10**)

- b. The salvation of Israel (**Rom 11:25-26**)
- c. Tribulation (**Matt 24:9-10, 21-22, 29-30; John 15:20; 16:33**)
- d. Apostasy (**Mat 24:10-12, 24; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1-5; Heb 6:6; 10:29; 2 Pet 2:20; 1 John 2:19**)
- e. Antichrist (**Matt 24:23-24; 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7**)
- f. Wars, earthquakes, and famines (**Matt 24:6-8; Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9-11**)