

## **Week 32, Wednesday, September 21, 2022: Of the State of Men After Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead, Of the Last Judgment (Why all of the above matters)**

### Chapter 32: Of the State of Men after Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead:

J.I. Packer writes, “Death is decisive for destiny ... from then on the godly and the ungodly reap what they sowed in this life ...”<sup>652</sup> John Murray also soberly warns us, “The ultimate state of bliss or woe is ... sealed by the event of death.”<sup>653</sup> What will be your final, eternal end? It begins here, now.

WCF 32:1: *The bodies of men, after death, return to dust and see corruption:(a) but their souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them:(b) the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.(c) And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day.(d) Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.*

(a)Gen. 3:19; Acts 13:36. (b)Luke 23:43; Eccl. 12:7. (c)Heb. 12:23; 2 Cor. 5:1, 6, 8; Phil. 1:23 with Acts 3:21 and Eph. 4:10. (d)Luke 16:23-24; Acts 1:25; Jude 6-7; 1 Pet. 3:19.

a. You will die. Your bodies are already rotting away, an awful sign that believers and unbelievers still suffer the curse that came upon us all because of the Fall: “... we have never really become accustomed to living alongside death.”<sup>654</sup> But your souls (which are who you are) were made to last forever. They are not eternal (you have a beginning) but they are immortal (you will have no end, against annihilationism).<sup>655</sup> The souls of Christians will go to Abraham’s bosom and the souls of unbelievers will be in the belly of hell (two sides of the “intermediate state” chasm). There is no “soul sleep” after death: both the souls of the righteous and the wicked will be “conscious and active”.<sup>656</sup> Notice the extreme contrast of heaven (light and glory) and hell (torments and darkness) even during the intermediate state. See also that everyone, in heaven, on earth, and in hell, is waiting for Christ’s final, Kingly, conquering work on Judgment Day as the final piece of human history.

b. The last sentence about no other places mentioned in Scripture after death teaches against the Roman Catholic idea of purgatory, which denies what Scripture teaches about the absolutely final

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<sup>652</sup> Packer, 248.

<sup>653</sup> Murray, “The Last Things”, in *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 402.

<sup>654</sup> Van Dixhoorn, 426.

<sup>655</sup> “[God] preserves the soul, and in that sense it is immortal extrinsically, but not intrinsically.” Sproul, vol. 3, 175. John Murray writes, “Man is not naturally mortal; death is not the debt of nature but the wages of sin.” “The Last Things”, in *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 401.

<sup>656</sup> Hodge, 380. Sproul points out that “This doctrine of soul sleep is thoroughly demolished in a volume entitled *Psychopannychia*, which is one of the lesser-known works of John Calvin.” (vol. 3, 177).

places of heaven and hell during the intermediate state, but also the sufficiency of Christ's final sacrifice.<sup>657</sup> There are no second chances after death to get right with God before Judgment Day.

WCF 32:2: *At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed:(e) and all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls for ever.(f)*  
(e)1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52. (f)Job 19:26-27; 1 Cor. 15:42-44.

Man is his soul, but he was made with a house, his body (or as Thomas Watson said earlier, a sheath, or later, the body clothes the soul)<sup>658</sup>: "... man is essentially an embodied spirit".<sup>659</sup> For instance, in 2 Cor. 5:1, our body is spoken of as a "house", and in 2 Cor. 12:2ff, Paul speaks of going into the third heaven, unsure of whether in the body, yet "he", his soul, his person, went.<sup>660</sup> An aspect of judgment for sin is that we die and are separated from our houses, but not because bodies are evil. Rather, Christianity teaches that both soul (man) and flesh (his house) were created good, but both were corrupted in the Fall. Thus, we need our souls reborn (the first resurrection) and then our bodies (the second resurrection, the "time of restitution of all things", Acts 3:21). The bodies of Christians living when Jesus returns will be spiritually transfigured so they can enter heaven. We must assume the same happened in the heavenly entrances of Enoch and Elijah. Contrary to modern liberalism, the *Confession* teaches a bodily, visible, personal resurrection.

WCF 32:3: *The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonour: the bodies of the just, by His Spirit, unto honour; and be made conformable to His own glorious body.(g)*  
(g)Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:43; Phil. 3:21.

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<sup>657</sup> Dickson teaches that the "Papists err who, besides these two places, have devised other four: First, a place called *Patrum*, in which the faithful who died before Christ's passion have been shut up as in a dark prison, under ground; and, being without torment and for the time wanting happiness, have been kept close there until Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven. Secondly, a place called *Limbus Infantum*, in which infants which die without baptism suffer also the eternal punishment, not of sense but of loss. The third is a most pleasant meadow in which, as in a royal prison, the souls that are in it want happiness, yet suffer no punishment of sense except what ariseth from the delay of happiness, but only of loss. This place seems to be the Elysian Fields, taken out of the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The fourth place is called *Purgatory*, which is a middle place between heaven and hell, in which are the saints who have departed from this life without making satisfaction by temporal punishments for their venial sins, yet have gone thither for the guilt of their punishment, the fault whereof is pardoned in this life; that when they have satisfied and are well purged from every spot and blemish, they may be admitted to that blessed vision in seeing God forever ..." (258-259)

<sup>658</sup> Watson, *Body of Divinity*, 306.

<sup>659</sup> Ward, 192.

<sup>660</sup> This insight on 2 Cor. 12 is from readings of works by Gordon H. Clark. Van Dixhoorn provides other helpful Scripture application: "... if some description of who we are must stand for the whole, it is appropriate to think of who we are as souls, lost souls, or saved souls. In attempting to understand this 'immortal subsistence' and existence—man as soul—we need to pay careful attention to the way in which Jesus used his pronouns when speaking to a dying thief: 'you', he said, 'will be with me in paradise'. In saying this, Jesus was not speaking about an embodied existence ... humanity as soul represents and encapsulates so much of what we are that the soul alone can be considered a 'me' or a 'you'." (427). He also footnotes here: "A careful reading of Genesis 2:7 indicates that the soul is man ..." In context, he emphasizes that having a body is the created and recreated righteous norm.

Every person's soul will again have a body. Those who remain corrupt in soul will be sent in corrupted bodies to the dishonor of hell, away from God's comfortable presence but always under His Personal wrath.<sup>661</sup> Those with born again souls will be given glorified bodies to live within God's comfortable presence. Notice in both cases, it will be by the power (authority) of Christ (Psalm 2; Revelation 19). As we think of our loss of loved ones in Christ, it is encouraging to think of the resurrection (see 1 Pet. 1:3; 3:15). Van Dixhoorn provides pastoral comfort for us: "... when a friend or family member dies ... we have lost a travelling companion. *They are already home.*"<sup>662</sup>

Some closing thoughts by Thomas Watson, from *A Body of Divinity*:

"The glory of Christ's kingdom does not stand in worldly pomp and grandeur, as other kings'; but it is seen in the cheerful sufferings of his people" (17). "Christ is the principle of my life. I fetch my spiritual life from Christ, as the branch fetches its sap from the root ... Christ is the end of my life ... our whole life is a living Christ ... Christ is the joy of my life" (290). "Death to a believer is ... the daybreak of eternal brightness. To show fully what a believer's gains are at death were a task too great for an angel; all hyperboles fall short of it; the reward of glory exceeds our very faith. ... Believers at death shall gain a writ of ease from all sins and troubles; ... sin expires with their life ... Life begins with a cry, and ends with a groan; but at death all troubles die. Believers at death shall gain the glorious sight of God ... (I.) Intellectually with the eyes of their mind, which divines call the beatific vision ... (2.) They shall behold the glorified body of Jesus Christ ... It will be infinitely delightful to the saints to see the amiable aspects and smiles of God's face ... The saints at death shall not only have a sight of God, but shall enjoy his love" (291). "Believers at death shall gain a celestial palace, a house not made with hands. 2 Cor v I. .... It is represented by transparent glass, to show its holiness. Rev xxi 2I. Believers at death shall gain the sweet society of glorified saints and angels; which will add to the felicity of heaven, as every star adds some lustre to the firmament ... In heaven there will be perfect love among the saints ... Believers at death shall gain perfection of holiness ... At death the saints will arrive at perfection; their knowledge will be clear; their sanctity perfect; their sun will be in its full meridian splendor" (292-293). "At death, the saints will gain a royal magnificent feast ... This royal supper of the Lamb will not only satisfy hunger, but prevent it. 'They shall hunger no more.' Rev vii I6. Nor can there be any surfeit at this feast, because a fresh course will be continually served. New and fresh delights will spring from God; therefore the tree of life in paradise is said to bear twelve sorts of fruit. Rev xxii 2" (293). "Faith gives a title to heaven: death gives the possession ... Think what it will be to have always a smiling look from Christ's face! to be brought into the banqueting-house, and have the banner of his love displayed over us! O ye saints, desire death; it is your ascension-day to heaven" (294). "A Christian's hope is not in this life, but he 'hath hope in his death.' Prov xiv 32 ... 'The day of death is better than the day of one's birth.' Eccl vii I" (295). "At death they are freed from a body of sin" (295-296). "... Paul ... did not cry out for his affliction, or his prison-chain, but for the body of sin. Now a believer at death is freed from sin; he is not taken away in, but from his sins; he shall never have a vain, proud thought more; he shall never grieve the Spirit of God any more. Sin brought death into the world, and death shall carry sin out of the world ... Death smites a believer as the angel did Peter, and made his chains fall off" (296). "At death the saints shall be freed from all the troubles and encumbrances to which this life is subject ... you may as well separate weight from lead, as trouble from the life of man ... There are many things to imbitter life and cause trouble, but death frees from all ... Care [worry]. The Greek word for care ... *To cut the heart in pieces* ... Fear ... The grave buries a Christian's fear ...

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<sup>661</sup> "... the most tormenting thing for the sinner in hell is not the absence of God, but his presence." On the other hand, "The highest hope of the Christian is the beatific vision of God." Sproul, vol. 3, 181.

<sup>662</sup> Van Dixhoorn, 429.

Labour ... Rev xiv 13 ...Suffering ... The eagle that flies high, cannot be stung with the serpent. Death gives the soul the wings of an eagle, to fly above all the venomous serpents here below ... Temptation ... death will free a child of God from temptation, so that he shall never be vexed more with the old serpent. After death has shot its dart, the devil will have done his shooting ... Sorrow ... we spend our years with sighing; it is a valley of tears; but death is the funeral of all our sorrows ... Rev vii 17” (297-298). “*At death the souls of believers pass into glory ...* Death brings the removal of all evils, and the attainment of all things” (300). “Glory is ... a state made perfect by the gathering together of everything good ... God is an infinite inexhaustible fountain of joy ... through Christ’s flesh some rays and beams of the Godhead will gloriously display themselves. God’s excellent majesty would overwhelm us; but through the veil of Christ’s flesh we shall behold the divine glory” (300-301). “Our seeing God in heaven will be without weariness ... The saints will never be weary of seeing God; for, God being infinite, there shall be every moment new and fresh delight springing from him into their souls ... Love has joy in it. To love beauty is delightful. God’s amazing beauty will attract the saints’ love, and it will be their heaven to love him ... This is the felicity of heaven, to be in the sweet embraces of God’s love ... to be sunning ourselves in the light of God’s countenance” (301). “... our knowledge in heaven shall not be diminished, but increased. We shall not only know our friends and godly relations, but those glorified saints whom we never saw before. It must be so; for society without acquaintance is not comfortable ... Matt xvii 3 ... surely in heaven the saints shall know one another, and be infinitely delighted in each other's company ... What is happiness but the essence of holiness? ... At death believers shall arrive at perfection of grace” (302). “Here we can have no rest, tossed and turned as a ball on racket ... How can a ship rest in a storm? But after death the saints get into their haven ... A Christian, after his weary marches and battles, shall put off his bloody armor, and rest himself upon the bosom of Jesus, the bed of perfume. When death has given the saints the wings of a dove, then they shall fly away to paradise and be at rest ... They pass immediately after death into glory ... (303).” “And as the soul does not die, so neither does it sleep in the body for a time. If the soul at death be absent from the body, it cannot sleep in the body. 2 Cor v 8 ... Let none be so vain as to talk of purgatory: a soul purged by Christ’s blood needs no fire of purgatory, but goes immediately from a deathbed into a glorified state ... See what little cause believers have to fear death, when it brings such glorious benefits ... What hurt does death, but take us from among fiery serpents, and place us among angels?” (304). “We shall taste of those joys of paradise, which exceed our faith, and may be better felt than can be expressed” (305). “Christ did not rise from the dead as a private person, but as the public head of the church; and the head being raised, the rest of the body shall not always lie in the grave” (306). “Seeing you expect your bodies shall rise to glory, keep them unspotted from sin” (308). “If your bodies glorify God, God will glorify your bodies” (309).

### Chapter 33: Of the Last Judgment:

Van Dixhoorn draws our attention to the intention of this last section of the *Confession*. “The focus of this chapter, to the end, is personal, rather than cosmological ... Instead of speculation, the final note in this confession of faith is one of persuasion ... A reminder of the return of Christ is a call to careful thinking and living.”<sup>663</sup> Packer writes, “The certainty of final judgment forms the frame within which the New Testament message of saving grace is set ... Knowledge of future judgment is always a summons to present repentance ... New Testament teaching about hell is meant to appall us and strike us dumb with horror, assuring us that, as heaven will be better than we could dream, so

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<sup>663</sup> Van Dixhoorn, 442.

hell will be worse than we can conceive.”<sup>664</sup> R.C. Sproul points out the importance of talking about hell and judgment in the Gospel ministry: “We soften the gospel in our day ... People are ‘invited’ to come to Christ. That was not how the apostles did it. An invitation is something that can be politely declined with impunity. But a command cannot be declined with impunity. Paul said that God commands everyone, everywhere, to repent. We decline that command at our own peril.”<sup>665</sup> Further, John Murray writes: “The church must constantly live and bear its witness in the conviction of the impending judgment. The summons to repentance, faith, and the obedience of the gospel receives its most urgent sanction from the certainty of the account that will be rendered to Christ as judge of all. And the church must also bear witness to the grandeur of the hope which the judgment presents, the manifestation and vindication of the glory of God.”<sup>666</sup> (417) This burden *began* Pilgrim’s Progress.

WCF 33:1: *God hath appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, (a) to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. (b) In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, (c) but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil. (d)*

(a) Acts 17:31. (b) John 5:22, 27. (c) 1 Cor. 6:3; Jude 6; 2 Pet 2:4. (d) 2 Cor. 5:10; Eccl. 12:14; Rom. 2:16; Rom. 14:10, 12; Matt. 12:36-37.

a. There is a final appointed Day during which King Jesus will judge the whole world and it will be completely comprehensive and totally thorough.<sup>667</sup> God the Father has given Jesus the God-man all authority to judge men and fallen angels, and He will. How sobering to know that even we Christians all will give an account of every thought, word, and deed before Jesus and the world (2 Cor. 5:10). Everything we try and hide now will be exposed by God before everyone. “It is true that we will not face condemnation, but we will still undergo an evaluation.”<sup>668</sup> Thus, our only hope is to have our names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Men today mock the idea of a final judgment. They always have – but as in the day of Noah, so it will be on the Last Day (2 Peter 3:1-13).

b. Here it is important to explain the variant views of “End Times” theology, or “eschatology” (see Williamson’s chart in the appendix below). Notice, against dispensational pre-millennialism (which Williamson rightly calls a “recent innovation”<sup>669</sup>), the judgment will involve Christians as well as non-Christians and it will be the final day of human history immediately following the general resurrection. According to Hebrews 1:1-2 (see also 2 Tim. 3:1; James 5:3; 2 Pet. 3:3), we are already

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<sup>664</sup> Packer, 258, 260, 262. Of Scripture’s images of hell such as a lake of fire that never stops burning where the worm never dies (always having rotting flesh to eat of those to suffer there eternally), R.C. Sproul writes: “The reason for using images and symbols is that we are not able to bear a more precise picture of reality. That Jesus would choose these terrifying symbols in describing hell indicates to me that the reality will be far worse. The sinner in hell will wish he could be in a lake of fire, rather than the reality to which it points.” Sproul, vol. 3, 181.

<sup>665</sup> Sproul, vol. 3, 189.

<sup>666</sup> Murray, “The Last Things”, in *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 417.

<sup>667</sup> Van Dixhoorn, 437.

<sup>668</sup> Sproul, vol. 3, 193. More positive motivation: “There are at least twenty-five texts in the New Testament that speak of degrees of reward for godliness.” (192).

<sup>669</sup> Williamson, 261.

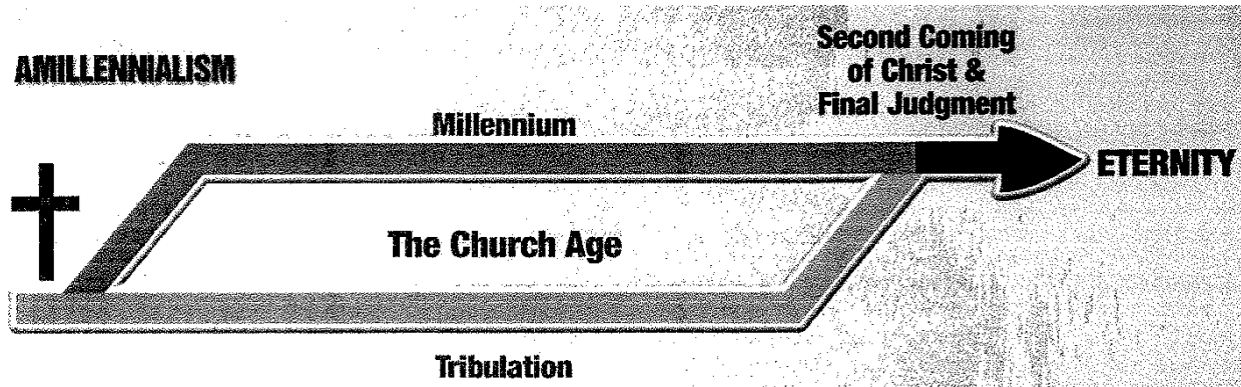
in the “last days”, the time between Christ’s first and second coming (which John the Baptist in the spirit of Elijah indicated has begun). Study the word “tribulation” in the NT in light of Revelation 1:9, and you will see clearly that we are already in it. While your pastor is a passionate a-millennialist (no literal thousand years of the Last Days, which we are presently in and which best explains the “already, not-yet” Christian experience), he concedes that the *Confession* allows room for all End Times views except dispensational pre-millennialism (yet its language best fits amillennialism).<sup>670</sup> But A-millennialism best interprets the End Times through the proper lens of the Covenant of Grace and the Abrahamic Covenant, as well as the view that the Old and New Testament saints are all one in the same Church, called “Israel”. It also correctly interprets certain texts “literarily”, recognizing the typology and symbolism of apocalyptic literature (Daniel, Revelation,

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<sup>670</sup> “... we believe that all who believe in (1) the visible bodily return of Jesus Christ, (2) the general resurrection of all men, and (3) the general judgment of all men, should be regarded as holding the Christian Faith. And we believe that those who hold these three principles steadfastly are able to subscribe to this portion of the Confession of Faith.” Williamson, 265. Gordon H. Clark concurs in general: “... none of the three main views is so clearly taught in Scripture that its acceptance should be a requirement for ordination to the ministry.” Clark, 120. Ward on the contrary, while noting that the Divines were mixed of post- and a-millennialists (although this would be an anachronistic description with terms not then in use), actually argues that pre-millennialism (he makes no distinction of historic and dispensational) is distinctively disallowed by the Confession. Ward, 198. Fesko agrees: “During the early modern period there were largely two competing understandings of the millennium: premillennialism ... and postmillennialism ... opinions were divided, though, on whether this reign is a literal or figurative thousand years.” (383) See his section on “Millennialism” under the final chapter on Eschatology (383-394) to learn how many Divines determinedly opposed premillennialism, like Scottish commissioner Robert Ballie; he and other Reformers labeled it heresy. Fesko also shares that (in its often conciliatory effort) “... the Standards reject premillennialism but do so silently [deduced from the Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 88] ... the Standards neither embrace nor condemn the view, which stands in marked contrast to the stronger and explicit rejections in the Augsburg Confession, the Forty-Two Articles, and the Second Helvetic Confession.” (391).

Still, it is worthy of noting that Amillennialism is required of ministers and laymen in the PRCA and EPC Australia. Further, consider the following quotes. David J. Engelsma, *Christ's Spiritual Kingdom: A Defense of Reformed Amillennialism*, p. 9: “Anglican theologian Peter Toon has written that the postmillennialists at the Westminster Assembly failed to ‘affect the final wording of the (Westminster) Confession of Faith, which gives the impression of following the Augustinian teaching’ (Puritan Eschatology: 1600-1648, in “The Manifold Grace of God, Puritan and Reformed Studies Conference,” 1968, p. 50). It is surely significant that, immediately after the adoption of the Westminster Confession, the independents drew up their own creed, the Savoy Declaration of 1658, in which they explicitly affirmed their postmillennial hope ...” P. 15: “The Reformed faith in the sixteenth century was amillennial. The Reformed faith in the sixteenth century condemned postmillennialism.” “... the traditional, creedal Reformed conception of the last days: abounding lawlessness; widespread apostasy; the antichrist; and great tribulation for the true church.” (He qualifies elsewhere this is not hopeless because the hope is in Christ and His advancing kingdom and His return). P. 64: “Postmillennialism is condemned by the Reformed creeds, explicitly by the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566, implicitly by the others.” Jay Adams, *The Time is At Hand*, pg. 7: “Augustine strongly advocated amillennialism, and it was the exclusive view of all the Reformers.” The Missouri Synod Lutheran’s demonstrate in a position paper that the Augsburg Confession was clearly Amillennial: <https://files.lcms.org/dl/f/23D8C043-52E4-4527-A81D-E63CF644A7D8>. Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, the chapter on Postmillennialism: “The majority of Reformed Christians are amillennial, though there has always been a significant postmillennial minority.” (29) “In point of fact it is the *amillennial* position that has been the predominant eschatological view of Christianity since the days of Augustine. It is the position held by the vast majority of Reformed and Lutheran theologians, set forth in all the Reformed and Lutheran confessions.” (31) “First given systematic expression by St. Augustine in his famous *City of God* ... amillennialism has its roots deep in historic Christianity ... all major thinkers in Christian history have held something akin to the amillennial position (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin).” (32) See also <http://www.mountainretreatorg.net/eschatology/creedamil.html>.

etc.). For instance, the “chain” of Revelation 20:1-2 is not literal material, but symbolically represents Christ’s actual but spiritual binding of Satan for a “thousand years” (which symbolizes perfect completion) while the Church advances throughout the world. Pastor Grant staunchly teaches from an a-millennial interpretation (or realized eschatology), but our denomination, the RPCGA, allows other views (with an emphasis on postmillennialism). Due to the historical context, many of the Assembly did think the end of the world was near.<sup>671</sup>



Source of above chart: <http://allthings.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/4-views-of-end-times.pdf> (you can see charts for each major eschatological view there along with a few paragraphs of explanation, times of popularity, and well-known theologians who hold each view).

WCF 33:2: *The end of God’s appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of His justice, in the damnation of the reprobate who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fulness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord: but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.*  
(e)

(e)Matt. 25:31-46; Rom. 2:5-6; Rom. 9:22-23; Matt. 25:21; Acts 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

The Last Day of judgment will praise God’s glory in two ways: 1) His mercy toward the elect; 2) His judgment toward the reprobate. Van Dixhoorn writes, “God’s people are finally, on judgment day, at their wisest ... on the same day God’s enemies are at their most foolish ... Although the ... first focus on the final day will be on God, not man.”<sup>672</sup> Look again at the incredible contrast of the two places to which each group shall go. Immortal men will have eternal existence somewhere; one place will be very wonderful, the other will be very horrible. This is why we should take Jesus Christ and life in His Church very seriously. We should redeem our time each day with our focus on the End. God will have the last laugh, and we want to be laughed with, not at (Ps. 2:4).

WCF 33:3: *As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity; (f) so will He have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be al-*

<sup>671</sup> Fesko, 363, 366, 368.

<sup>672</sup> Van Dixhoorn, 440. He adds, “... the righteous are blessed by entering God’s presence, the wicked are cursed by being cast from it.” (441). That is, God’s comfortable presence. God is everywhere, and in hell punishing.

*ways watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.* (g)

(f) 2 Pet. 3:11, 14; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; 2 Thess. 1:5-7; Luke 21:27-28; Rom. 8:23-25. (g) Matt. 24:36, 42-44; Mark 13:35-37; Luke 12:35-36; Rev. 22:20.

Jesus wants us to “be always watchful”. That is why we don’t know the day of His coming. We are to be getting ready every moment (Psalm 45:8-17; Rev. 19:7; 21:2): “... the return of the king marks the end of all opportunity to repent ... When Jesus returns, every rebel should want to have made his peace with God already. When Jesus returns, every Christian should want to be found awake and serving, rather than awash in sin.”<sup>673</sup> Judgment Day will come at any moment, like a thief in the night, like lightning across the sky: “The designed effect of the attitude of uncertainty with regard to the time of the second advent and general judgment in which the saints are placed is, that they should regard it as always immediately impending; that they should look forward to it with solemn awe, and yet with joyful confidence; and hence, in view of it, be incited to the performance of duty and the attainment of holiness, and comforted in sorrow.”<sup>674</sup> This view of the end is intended to “deter” lazy sinful lives, and give “greater consolation” for the “godly” that are mocked in this world and by worldly churches and Christians: our concerns will be proven to be wise and we will be vindicated by King Jesus before those who shirk His authority over our lives presently. May we all indeed by these thoughts “be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.”

This is a Church membership class, and this is what the Church is all about: the Kingdom of Heaven taking over this present world by King Jesus, Who is soon to return to consummate it on Judgment Day to rescue His people from this world. This is what the world’s history is about from Genesis 3:15 to Revelation 22:21. This is what your life as a Christian must be about: *watching* for the Last Day. Why does Satan use entertainment in all its forms so aggressively? To keep you watching everything *but* for Judgment Day so you are not ready for it when it comes (Review Deut. 25:17-18 with 1 Pet. 5:8). Gordon H. Clark notes, “The strategy of the humanists is to occupy the time and the attention of children to such an extent that they will have no opportunity to hear the gospel.”<sup>675</sup>

The pastor’s solemn duty is to constantly call you to take your eyes off the world so that you will watch and be ready for the coming of King Jesus. To call you to do exactly the opposite of your natural tendencies and desires: *For, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. (Ezekiel 3:17) But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. (Ezekiel 33:6-7).* Similarly, when Paul speaks to the elders of the church in Ephesus upon his departure never to return in Acts 20:18-31, he says: ... *Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward*

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<sup>673</sup> Van Dixhoorn, 443.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid, 396.

<sup>675</sup> Clark, *WPB*, 122-123.



*our Lord Jesus Christ ... And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God ... Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. God will hold the blood of the unrepentant Church upon the watchmen if they do not warn the people because they are more afraid of the wrath of man than of God. You are called again to watch for the Judgment. Look to Jesus on the cross to be concerned to have yourself spared of what He went through there, for you would have to endure it for eternity in the Lake of Fire. And watch for Jesus' return to vindicate you before the world for your faith in Him and walk of faith with and for Him. You should eagerly anticipate His glorious return, for it is your glory. In fact, after your public acknowledgment and acquittal (based on already having been justified on earth) you will join Jesus in judging fallen angels and men (WLC 90) before entering as Christ's bride into final glory within the comfortable presence of the Father. In fact, you should look forward to Judgment Day:*

It is in [the] righteousness of Christ that we will stand. We will find no real reason to be proud of ourselves before the judgment seat of God. Nor will we find reason to fear ... There is a note of joyful expectation in the final line of this confession that reflects the joyful and blessed hope of the Scriptures. Christians are not braced for the coming of the Lord, anxiously worrying about his arrival. We are eager for his coming, hoping to be the generation that will hold the door open for him (*Luke 12:36*).<sup>676</sup>

Some closing thoughts by Thomas Watson, from *A Body of Divinity*:

“We must all appear; the greatness of men's persons does not exempt them from Christ's tribunal; kings and captains are brought in trembling before the Lamb's throne. Rev vi 15” (311). “Such as will not hear the trumpet of the gospel sound ‘repent, and believe,’ shall hear the trumpet of the archangel sounding, ‘arise, and be judged.’ (312). “At that day Christ their judge will own [Christians] by name. Those whom the world scorned, and looked upon as madmen and fools, Christ will take by the hand, and openly acknowledge to be his favorites” (313). “The saints shall be fully crowned with the enjoyment of God for ever. They shall be in his sweet presence, ‘in whose presence is fullness of joy’, Psa xvi II, and this shall be for ever” (314).

#### **Suggested Reading:**

- “Celebration of Death?” Mortification of Spin podcast: <https://www.reformation21.org/mos/podcast/42462>
- PRPC sermon: “Walk by Faith in Heaven: Walking by Faith, Not by Sight”: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=425224614735>
- PRPC sermon on Philippians 1:21-26: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=312163758729>
- PRPC sermon, “When You Die Your Soul Immediately Lives in Heaven (The Intermediate State in Glory)”: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=12301964224863>
- PRPC sermon WLC series, WLC 86, on the intermediate state: <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=6412144423>
- *A Case for Amillennialism*, Kim Riddlebarger

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<sup>676</sup> Van Dixhoorn, 438, 444.

- “Princeton and the Millennium: A Study of American Postmillennialism,” Kim Riddlebarger: <https://www.kimriddlebarger.com/the-riddleblog/princeton-and-the-millennium-a-study-of-american-postmillennialism?rq=postmill>
- *More Than Conquerors*, William Hendriksen
- “A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism,” David Engelsma: <http://www.prca.org/articles/amillennialism.html>
- Various articles under “Eschatology (End Times Theology)” at [http://www.prca.org/pamphlets\\_and\\_articles.html](http://www.prca.org/pamphlets_and_articles.html)
- “The Late Great Planet Church” video in PRPC library (against dispensationism).
- “Amillennialism”, Anthony Hoekema: [http://www.the-highway.com/amila\\_Hoekema.html](http://www.the-highway.com/amila_Hoekema.html)
- *The Bible and the Future*, Anthony Hoekema
- *The Time is at Hand*, Jay Adams
- *End Times Conference*, [https://reformedresources.org/search.php?search\\_query=End%20Times&section=product](https://reformedresources.org/search.php?search_query=End%20Times&section=product) [MP3 downloads]
- PRPC’s “The Revelation” Wednesday Study lecture series at [sermonaudio.com/puritanchurch](http://sermonaudio.com/puritanchurch) (handout notes and diagrams are available upon request). See especially the four-part “mini-series”, “More on the Millennium” on Revelation 20:1-15.
- Two PRPC’s sermons on the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25) at [sermonaudio.com/puritanchurch](http://sermonaudio.com/puritanchurch) in the series on Matthew.
- Joel Beeke’s lecture, “The Postmillennial Vision of the American Puritan” in <https://reformedresources.org/eschatology-in-church-history-pcrt-2010-workshops-mp3-download-set/> (the whole conference of lectures are well worth it, all espousing Amillennialism)
- *The Pauline Eschatology*, J.G. Vows
- <https://www.mountainretreatorg.net/eschatology.html> (many resources promoting Amillennialism while also providing ample resources answering arguments from the other eschatological views)
- *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2:
  - “The Interadventual Period and the Advent: Matthew 24 and 25” (Ch. 35, pp 387-400)
  - “The Last Things” (Ch. 36, pp 401-417)

**Assigned Reading for Wednesday, September 28, 2022, Last class!:**

- LC 67-68, 90, 134-136, 140-152, 154-160 and corresponding Scriptures
- SC 31-32, 67-69, 73-84, 88-90 and corresponding Scriptures
- Review the membership vows handed out at beginning of class

