

Beyond the End Times: Lecture One

The Second Coming of Christ

I. WHY?

II. Popular mythology (of recent origin) concerning the second coming:

- A. Two stages or one? Coming “for” Vs. coming “with” the saints
- B. The state of the world at the time of his coming (will there be “signs of the times”?)
- C. Is it immanent?
- D. Will there be a millennial kingdom?

III. Passages that do not apply to the Second Coming—Matt.10:23; 16:28/ Rev.2-3

IV. Passages that might not apply —Matt.24:29-31 (parallels)/Rev.1:7; 19:11ff

V. Passages that do apply—Acts 1:10-11/ “the day of the Lord” [or “of God” or “of Christ”]/ “The last day”(John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48)

- A. The resurrection and rapture—Acts 24:15/John 5:28-29/ 1 Cor.15:51-52/ 1 Thess.4:16-18/ Rom.8:23/2 Cor.5:1-4/ Phil.3:20-21
- B. The judgment—2 Tim.4:1/ Matt.25:31ff/ Rev.20:11-13
- C. The new creation—Rom.8:21-23/ 2 Pet.3:10-13/ Rev.21:1ff

VI. Does anything remain to be accomplished before this happens?

- A. World evangelization—Matt.24:13/Rev.7:9
- B. Maturity of the church—Eph.4:11-13/ Mark 4:26-29/ Col.1:28?

VII. Probable order of events (there is no passage that mentions all these things together so as to give us an unambiguous chronology):

- A. Jesus descends into the clouds and the trumpet calls forth the dead
- B. The dead arise (possibly the Christians first)
- C. The living Christians are caught up
- D. The earth and its inhabitants are burned-up and creation restored to its pre-fallen state (if the unsaved dead were not raised at the same moment as the saved, they would probably be raised at this point)
- E. Jesus and the saints (the New Jerusalem) descend to the restored earth
- F. The judgment takes place, and eternity commences

Beyond the End Times: Lecture Two:

The Final Judgment

I. What is the point of a day of judgment?

- A. A righteous judge must eventually put all things right. God's judgments are right (Ps. 9:8; 19:9; 92:15; 119:137/ Rom.2:2)
- B. God's judgments are a vindication of the righteous (Ps.7:8/26:1/35:24/43:1/54:1)
- C. Endless mercy to the wicked is unkindness to the innocent and is thus unloving (Luke 18:1-7/ Rev.6:9-10; 18:20)

II. What is the basis of judgment?

- A. According to works— Matt.25:31-46/ 1 Pet.1:17/ Rev.20:13
- B. Aren't we justified by faith? —Gal.5:6/ James 2:1-14

III. What will be brought up?

- A. Great detail—Matt.12:36/ Eccl.12:13-14
- B. Long-forgotten things—Amos 8:7/ Ps.25:7
- C. Time does not expunge guilt—Gen.35:22; 49:2-4/ Heb.12:16-17
- D. What about believers? Will our past be dredged up?—1 Cor.11:31-32

IV. What about those who have never heard?

- A. God's wrath is against willful rejection of truth (Rom.1:18/ John 3:
- B. Ignorance is not a spiritual advantage (Eph.4:18/Hos.4:6/Jonah 4:11/Num.15:24-25)
- C. No one is absolutely ignorant (Rom.1:19-21/ 2 Pet.3:5)
- D. Infants would be the one exception (Rom.7:9-11; 4:15; 5:13/ Matt.19:14)
- E. Degrees of ignorance are taken into consideration in assigning penalties (Gen.20:6/Deut.1:39/Acts 17:30/John9:41/Heb.5:2/Luke12:47-48)

V. What kind of rewards will the saints receive?

- A. True riches? —Luke 16:11-12
- B. Degrees of reward
- C. Crowns?—

Beyond the End Times: Lecture Three:

The Eternal State of the Saved

A father's explanation to a young child: "Heaven is where you can have anything you want"

I. What happens when we die?

- A. Sleep?
- B. Relocate?

II. Glorification—Rom.8:17-18, 23/ Phil.3:21/ 2 Cor.4:17

III. Location? —John 14:2-3/ 1 Thess.4:14/ Matt.5:5/ Rev.5:10; 21-22

IV. Seeing God—Matt.5:8/ 1 John 3:2-3/ Rev.22:4

V. What will we be doing?

- A. Reunion with the family of God: recognition of loved ones? —1 Cor.13:9, 12
- B. Worship: more than playing harps on clouds—Rev.22:3
- C. Ruling...over whom?— 2 Tim.2:12/ Rev.2:26/ Luke 19:17,19
- D. Ongoing discovery and revelation— Eph.2:7
- E. Marriage, sex and reproduction?—Matt.22:30
- F. Will there be no oceans?—Rev.21:1

VI. Could there be a repeat of "the fall"?

- A. No sin in our nature
- B. No test (we get there as a result of passing the test)
- C. No one, but Christ, in any role comparable to Adam

Beyond the End Times: Lecture Four:

The Final State of the Unbelievers

I. Language of “hell” Sheol, Hades, Tartarus, Gehenna (2 Kg.23:10/Jer.19:6, 11-13)

II. Traditional view of “hell” (2 Thess.1:9/ Mk.9:43-48 [Isa.66:24]/Rev.14:10-11 [Isa.34:10]/Matt.25:41)

1. Being made in the image of God, all humans are innately immortal, and must consciously spend eternity in one state or another;
2. Only those who believe in Christ will have access to God’s presence for all eternity. All others, though equally conscious, must remain forever absent from God, apart from all light, joy, fulfillment, consolation and blessing;
3. The language of unquenchable fire suggests either literal flames, or, if metaphorical, some equally tormenting condition of soul that never ends;
4. That this torment never ends for the lost in hell is suggested in passages like 2 Thess.1:9 and Revelation 14:11.

IV. Problems with the traditional view:

1. All of the phraseology supporting the impression of eternal torment comes from apocalyptic Old Testament passages;
2. The Bible nowhere teaches that unsaved human beings will live forever. This view “goes back to Plato’s view of the soul as metaphysically indestructible, a view shared by Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin” (Pinnock);
3. God never warned Adam and Eve (or anyone else) that eternal torture would be their penalty if they were to sin. He only mentioned death (Gen.2:17/ Ezek.18:4/ Rom.6:23), which would be an enormous understatement of the truth, if the real, unmentioned penalty was to be endless torment;
4. Eternal punishment for temporal crimes seems disproportionate and unjust even by God’s own stated standards (“an eye for an eye”). A debt or penalty that takes eternity to repay, cannot ever be fully paid. Thus, if eternal torment accurately reflects God’s punishment of sinners, justice is never done for all eternity. The problem of evil will never be resolved;
5. The Bible speaks of degrees of punishment or proportionate penalties for sinners (Matt.10:22, 24/ Luke 12:47-48). If all sinners suffer eternally, then all receive an equally infinite (not proportionate) punishment;
6. For God to supernaturally keep people alive forever just so they can be tortured, without hope of release or redemption seems to have nothing but cruelty and vindictiveness as its motive. Such a motive does not agree with the picture of God’s mercy and love for all men that the Bible (and especially Christ) reveals;
7. How could the saints (or God) rejoice in eternity, knowing that their loved ones are being tortured forever? If God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek.33:11), how could He find any comfort in their eternal torment?

V. Christian Universalism (“Universal Reconciliation”)

1. God desires for all people to be saved (1 Tim.2:4/ John 3:16/ Ezek.18:23, 32)
2. Christ died to redeem the whole world (John 1:29/ 1 John 2:2/ 1 Tim.2:6)

3. If all for whom Christ died are not ultimately reconciled, then God and Christ are the cosmic losers for all eternity, and the devil is the winner, which hardly agrees with biblical statements about the victory of Christ (Isa. 42:1-4/Col.2:15/ Heb.2:14/ 1 John 3:8);
4. The Bible often speaks in terms of universal salvation and restoration (1 Tim. 4:10/ Rom.5:18-19/ Col.1:19-20/ Eph.1:9-10/ John 12:32/ Isa.53:11)
5. After death, the wicked will be punished proportionately to their guilt, or until they are brought to repentance (the terms “eternal” and “forever” in passages about punishment ought to be translated differently from the Greek, in order to be less misleading);
6. There is no obvious reason (in scripture or in logic) why the God who desires that all would repent and will accept the genuine repentance of a life-long sinner even the moment before death, would arbitrarily declare death to be the cut-off point for any opportunity to repent and be forgiven.
7. Given enough pressure and time, all men will ultimately repent—if not before death, then afterward.
8. There is nothing in this teaching to offend the sentiments of godly, Christ followers—in fact, it is the view that would most satisfy those who share God’s heartfelt desire for the salvation of the lost.
9. In the first four centuries (it is said) there were six main Christian schools. Four of them (Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea and Edessa) taught universalism; one (Ephesus) taught conditional immortality, and one (Rome) taught eternal torment.

VI. Conditional Immortality (“Annihilationism”)

1. Only God is immortal by nature (1 Tim.6:16)
2. Man must “seek immortality” (Rom.2:7)
3. God gives eternal life (immortality) to men on condition of their faith in Christ (John 10:28/ 1 John 5:11-12/ Rom.6:23)
4. The fate of the wicked is described using terms such as “destroy,” “consume,” “perish,” and “death” (Matt.10:28/ 1 Thess.5:3/ 2 Thess.1:9; 2:8/ John 3:16/ Rom.2:12)
5. The lost really do lose out forever. Their punishment (though not their punishing) is unending, that is, irrevocable (2 Thess.1:9);
6. The eternal loss of those who finally rebel is the terrible cost that God Himself endures out of His determination to honor the creature’s freedom of choice, however, He will not have to eternally endure the heartache of knowing that millions of His offspring are being tormented endlessly;
7. The lost will be resurrected, along with the righteous, in order to face the judgment (John 5:28-29/ Acts 24:15). Upon being condemned, they will suffer punishment proportionate to their guilt (Luke 12:47-48), and then be allowed to pass into natural non-existence (the same condition they were in before they were born). In the end, it will be as if they never existed.
8. Though this view does not have as happy an ending as does Christian universalism, it nonetheless ends with a tolerable and just resolution to the problem of sin in the world, and it takes seriously the scriptures about the eternal forfeiture of eternal life by those who die in rebellion against Christ.
9. Objections and clarifications:
 - A. The story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19/ The Gemara Babylonicum)
 - B. Don’t the righteous continue living beyond the grave? (Rev.20:4-5)
 - C. How about the phenomenon of mediums, “ghosts,” “haunted” houses, etc.?