

Tonight we've come to our final session in our study, "You and Your Beliefs." We're examining the final doctrine in our series, eschatology, the Doctrine of Last Things.

The Doctrine of Last Things, part 2

Review: (from last week)...

I. The Foundation for Eschatology: The Plan of God

God has a Plan, a Program. If we don't plug eschatology into the framework of that Plan, we'll be off base. Eschatology grows out of...

- A. The Doctrine of Creation (Gen 1-3)
- B. The Doctrine of Redemption (II Cor 5:19, 21)
 - 1. Christ's First Coming (I Cor 15:3)
 - 2. Christ's Second Coming (I Cor 15:22ff)

Here's the message of the Bible. God is redeeming a people for Himself. He is reclaiming and restoring a universe that was wrecked by sin. To whom did God the Father commit this task? To His Son, Jesus Christ

II. The Focus of Eschatology: The Person of Jesus Christ

God did not give us a systematic theology textbook. He gave us the Scriptures. The Scriptures reveal and focus on a Person, Jesus Christ. So too our eschatology.

Application: There are over 250 references to the return of Christ in the NT. Why? Why did God give us so many passages relating to eschatology? Did He give them to us to satisfy our curiosity? So we could debate them?

What is the purpose of eschatology? Let's look at two texts...

1 Thes 4:18 "Wherefore, encourage one another with these words."

2 Thes 2:16-17 "Now our Lord who has given us this hope...establish you in every good word and work."
must focus on Christ.

III. The Fulfillment of Eschatology

Key Text: Rev 21:5 "...Behold I make all things new."

When Jesus came to the world, He came to restore, to reconcile, to renew.

Objection: "If Christ brought newness into the world, why is it still so wrecked by sin and death?"

Key: It's important to see that God is bringing newness into the world in *progressive stages*, each one leading to the next. God is reclaiming His world and reestablishing His Kingdom through the following stages.

A. New Man

When Christ came the first time, He came as our representative. He came as the second Adam. He came to reverse the effects of Adam's sin.

See: Rom 5:12, 17 "For if by one man's offense..."

What do we experience once we are identified with Christ?

Rom 6:4 "...newness of life."

We become a New man if we are in Christ.

To do: Discuss the importance of the phrase "in Christ" in NT—it describes our standing.

Key Question: What is the New man? It's not a *part* of us. It's what we become if we are in Christ. See...

I Cor 15:45 "The first man Adam...the last Adam was made a lifegiving spirit."

I Cor 15:49 "As we have born the image of the earthly...so now the heavenly."

We were created in God's image. But sin marred that. Christ renews our capacity to reflect God's image.

Eph 4:23-24 "And be renewed...put on the new man..."

Christ makes all things new, starting with the individual person. The new Man.

B. New People

When Christ came the first time, what did He establish? According to the following, a New Covenant...

Jer 31:31-33 "Behold the days come that I will make a new covenant..."

When Jesus Christ came 2000 years ago, He established that New Covenant. Paul emphasized this in the following...

I Cor 11:25 "This cup is the new testament in My blood."

At Pentecost, Christ sent His Spirit. In so doing, He formed a New People.

II Cor 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creation."

Key: Right now, if you're in Christ, do you possess *newness*? The answer is...Yes! Christ has made us a *new man* and has made us part of a *new people*.

Why then do we struggle? Because Christ's work has yet another phase.

C. New Age

In this present age, Jesus Christ rules as King in the hearts of His people. Yet the world does not know He is king, and certainly does not recognize Him as king.

But listen. The day is coming when the One whose rule is now "in cognito" will be visible to all. When? In the Age to Come, the New Age.

Discuss: We should exercise caution when studying eschatology. We should strive to say *no more than* and *no less than* what the Bible says. What is the danger of saying *more than*...? Of saying *less than*...?

So let's proceed with caution in our study. Yet let's proceed!

What phrase do the OT prophets constantly use to refer to that New Age? "The Day of the Lord." (some other closely associated terms in the Bible: "Parousia" " Kingdom of God ")

Obadiah, Amos, Joel and others made it clear that a future time is coming when God will send both wrath, and subsequent blessing on the world. Note both elements...

**A Day of Wrath and Judgment

Amos 5:18, 20 "Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord...darkness." See also: Isa 34:8; 35:4

**A Day followed by great Blessing

Amos 9:11, 13 "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David..."

If you were to chart eschatology from the perspective of the prophets, it would look like this...

Present Age >> Age to Come

Key: The OT doesn't distinguish the fact that there is an *overlap* in these 2 ages.

Observation: The phrase "Day of the Lord" seems to be a comprehensive term in Scripture describing the entire period from Christ's return to the final resurrection and judgment. It refers to that time between the present age

and the new creation.

1. Refers to the Tribulation period

I Th 5:2, 4 "For you know that the Day of the Lord comes as a thief..."

2. Refers to the formation of the New Heavens and Earth

II Pt 3:10, 13 "But the day of the Lord will come....in which the elements shall melt."

Key: We're living in the Day of man. But the Lord's day will come.

The Lord's Day will be that time when Christ fulfills the Plan of God to restore this fallen world. He will reverse the effects of sin on creation. Right now the creation groans in pain (Rom 8:22). In that Day the lion and lamb will lie down together in paradise.

We live in the Present Age. The present age is an age of suffering, of ridicule for Christians (II Tim 3; I Pt 1). But we can have confidence. How? We know that the New Age is coming. What will the Lord do in the New Age?

1. The Lord will return and remove His people from the world.-Rapture

Mt 24:42 ?

I Th 4:13-18

2. The Lord will pour out His wrath on the world.-Tribulation

Rev 6-19 gives vivid description of this.

Who will cause havoc in the world during this 7 year period? One man described as...

--The Abomination that causes desolation (Dan 9:27; Mt 24:15)

--Paul refers to him as the man of lawlessness (II Th 2:3)

--John uses the term Antichrist (I Jn 2:18)

Will the church be present during this hour of testing and wrath? God has promised to deliver His people, the Church, from this time.

Rev 3:10

I Th 5:9 "For God has not appointed us to wrath..."

3. The Lord will establish His Messianic Kingdom.

II Sam 7:16

Isa 65:18-25

Rom 11:26 This will be the time when all Israel will be saved.

Rev 20:4-6 1000 year period when Christ reigns in absolute righteousness

Satan will gain a following after the Messianic Kingdom. That will lead to a final rebellion against God (Rev 20:7-10). However, Christ will devour this army (20:9). Then He will judge them at the Great White Throne judgment and cast them into the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15).

Is that it? No. The goal of God's redemptive activity is not completed in the New Age, but when? The following...

D. New Creation

II Pt 3:12-13 "Looking for a coming day of God...new heavens and earth..."

The book of Revelation does not end with the Messianic Kingdom, but with a brilliant description of the New Creation (Rev 21-22). No more suffering, tears, death (21:4). The people of God will serve their King in unhindered fellowship (22:3).

Notice again what Christ will do at the climax of history.

I Cor 15:24 "...He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father..."

Mission accomplished!!

Key: This then is the goal of eschatology. To unveil the Person of Jesus Christ. To reveal His marvelous and certain work in which He will both rescue and judge. To bring glory to God Who alone is worthy of glory.

Discuss: What practical differences should this truth make on our lives?