

DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)
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Eschatology is the study of the last things, “the systematic study of eventualities” (J Oliver Buswell Jr.). It is the capstone of systematic theology with every branch of theology finding its resolution in it. Eschatology is derived from the Greek word, *eschatos* (εσχάτος), which means *to be in the last gasp, at the point of death*. This doctrine is concerned with death, the end of the world, the ultimate destiny of humankind, the final events in the history of the world of humankind: the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, and Paradise.

1. IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

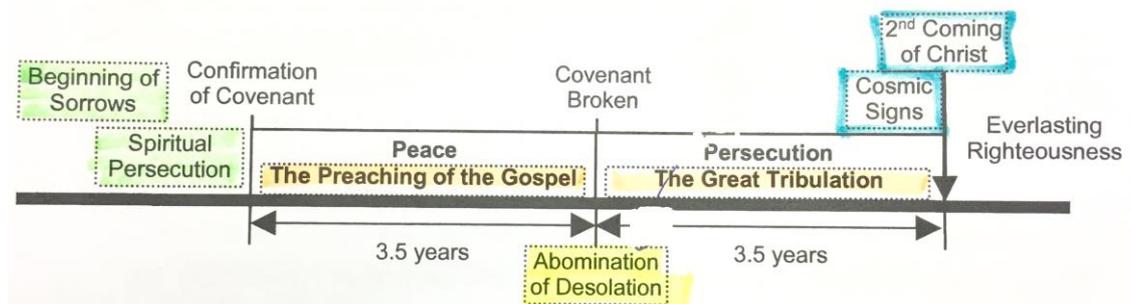
- a. WCF 32.1 The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. 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. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledges none.
- b. WSC Q. 37. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? Answer: The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.
- c. This is called the **intermediate** state – in which souls exist between death and the resurrection.

2. THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

- a. Upon death (absent from the body), the Christian will be present with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8).
- b. The unbeliever, after death, will be cast into a place of fire and torment till judgment day (Lk 13:27-28, 16:23-24, Jude 6-7, Rev 20:11-15).
- c. Jesus described the intermediate state in the story of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk 16:19-31):
 - i. The souls of the departed are alive and fully conscious: can see, feel, and think.
 - ii. The wicked experience tremendous pain and suffering.
 - iii. The redeemed are in heavenly bliss - “*in Abraham’s bosom*”.
 - iv. Verbal communication is possible between inhabitants of both sides although heaven and hell are separated by a great gulf. But the departed cannot return to communicate with the living (Ex 22:18, Lev 20:6, 27, Deut 18:10-12).
 - v. The soul waits to be united with its glorified or resurrected body.
- d. **False Doctrines on the Intermediate State**
 - i. Soul Sleep – a view held by Seventh Day Adventists.
 - This view teaches that after death, a man’s soul becomes unconscious.
 - The Bible teaches: Luke 16:19-31 disproves this theory. 2 Cor 5:8 - absent from the body, present with the Lord.
 - ii. Annihilation – a view held by Jehovah’s Witness, John Stott, Clark Pinnock.
 - This doctrine teaches that there is no hell: when the impenitent dies, he will cease to exist. This runs counter to the doctrine of the justice of God.
 - The Bible teaches that all men will exist forever after death (Ex 12:7, Mt 25:46, Rom 2:8-10, Rev 14:11, 20:10).
 - iii. Purgatory – taught by the Roman Catholic Church.
 - This view teaches that those who died without being cleansed of venial sins will remain for some time in purgatory to be purified before they can enter heaven.
 - The Bible teaches that the believer goes immediately to heaven after death (2 Cor 5:8-10, Lk 23:43), having been eternally purged by the blood of Christ (Heb 9:12, 14, 22). Jesus paid it all; there is no second or further payment by the believer.

3. SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

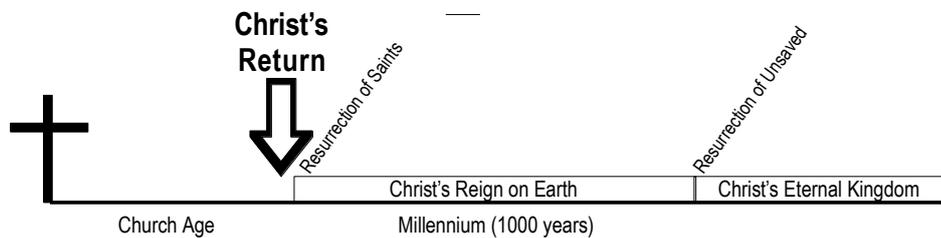
- a. WCF 33.1 Of The Last Judgment.** God has appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall 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.
- b. Time of the Second Coming of Christ.**
- i. The exact time will be unknown (Mt 24:36)
 - ii. However, by the signs, we can know the nearness of it (Lk 21:31, 1 Thes 5:2-6).
- c. Signs of the Second Coming of Christ**
- i. False Christs (Mt 24:5, Mk 13:6, Lk 21:8).
 - ii. Wars and rumours of wars (Mt 24:6-7, Mk 13:7-8, Lk 21:9-10).
 - iii. Natural disasters (Mt 24:7, Mk 13:8, Lk 21:11).
 - iv. Persecution of believers (Mt 24:8-13, Mk 13:9-13, Lk 21:12-19).
 - v. Evangelisation of the World (Mt 24:14, Mk 13:10).
 - vi. Apostasy (Mt 24:11-12, 23-24, Mk 13:9-11, Lk 21:22-24, 2 Thes 2:3, 1 Tim 4:1-2, 2 Tim 3:1-5).
 - vii. Regathering of Israel (Isa 11:11, Zech 10:9-12, Mt 24:32-33).
- d. Manner of the Second Coming of Christ**
- i. Personal, physical coming (Acts 1:11, Rev 1:7)
 - ii. Visible coming (Mt 24:27, 30, 26:64, Col 3:4, Tit 2:13)
 - iii. Sudden (Mt 24:37-44, 1 Thes 5:2-3, Rev 3:3, 16:15)
 - iv. Glorious (Tit 2:13)
 - v. Victorious (Rev 19:11-16).
- e. Purpose of the Second Coming of Christ.**
- i. *Great White Throne* - judge non-believers (Rev 20:11-15), cast into lake of fire.
 - ii. *Bema Judgment Seat of Christ* - reward the redeemed (1 Cor 3:12-15, Col 3:24; 2 Cor 5:10) for what they have done for Him on earth.
 - iii. *To usher in the Millennium.*
- f. The Great Tribulation** described in the
- i. *Old Testament:* the day of the Lord (Isa 2:12, 13:6,9, Ezek 13:5, Joel 1:15, etc, Amos 5:18,20, Obad 15, Zeph 1:7, 14, Zech 14:1, Mal 4:5); the day of God's vengeance (Isa 34:8, 63:1-6); the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer 30:7); the 70th week of Dan 9:27.
 - ii. *New Testament:* the day of the Lord (Acts 2:20, 1 Thes 5:2, 2 Thes 2:2, 2 Pet 3:10); the great day of His wrath (Rev 6:17); the hour of His judgment (Rev 14:7); the end of the world (Mt 13:40, 49); the tribulation (Mt 24:21, 29).
- g. The Rapture** is a sudden catching up or removal of believers from the world when Christ returns. Although the term "rapture" is not found in the Bible, it is taught in the
- OT - in the case of Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11).
 - NT - (1 Cor 15:51-53, 1 Thes 4:13-18).



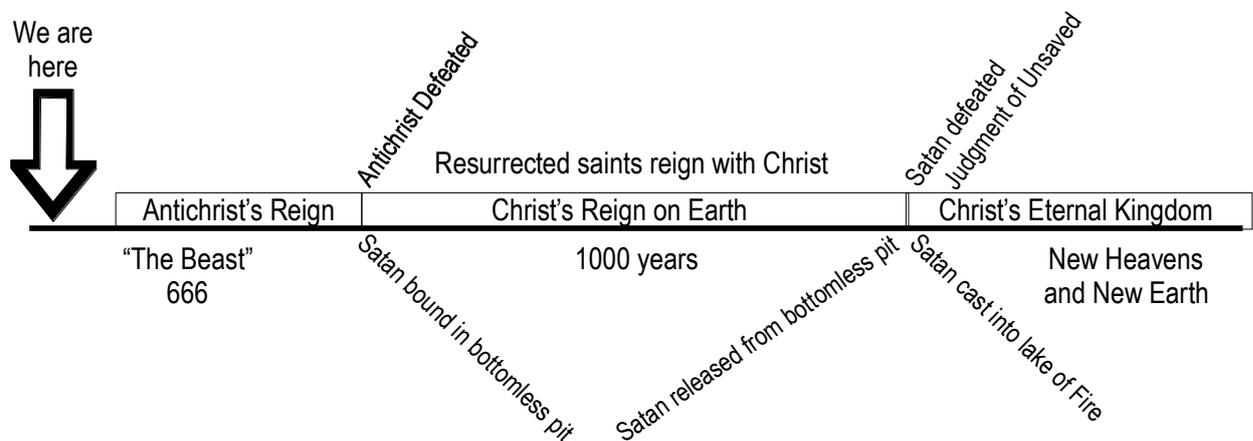
Olivet Discourse (Mt 24): [Ref: Revelation notes by Rev Ho Chee Lai]

4. **THE MILLENNIUM** [charts & notes provided by Rev Charles Seet]

- a. **The millennium is Christ's 1,000 year rule on earth** (Rev 20:2, 4, 6). The word "millennium" is derived from the Latin term *mille* ("thousand") and *annus* ("year").
- God promised David a physical kingdom (Zech 14:9) whereby David's son will reign as King forever (2 Sam 7:12-23). Christ will sit upon the throne of his father David and rule the earth from Jerusalem (Isa 24:23, Jer 3:17, Mic 4:2). God will keep His promise to Israel (Ps 89:34-37).
- b. **Premillennialism.** Christ returns before the thousand years. [view of Life B-P Church]



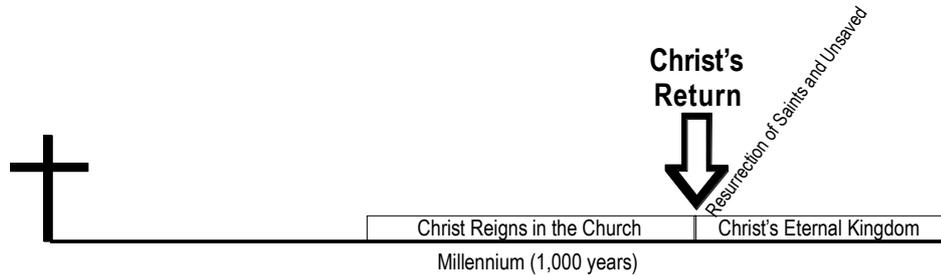
- Before Jesus returns, powerful empires and nations will rise and fall, culminating in the rule of the whole world by the Antichrist (Mt 24:7, 33ff).
- The Gospel of Christ have been preached in the whole world, but there would also be a great falling away from the faith by the church (Mt 24:10-12).
- The Antichrist will make a peace treaty with the nation of Israel at first, but then suddenly break this treaty, oppress Israel, and demand to be worshipped as a god. He will also require everyone to receive a mark on their forehead "666", without which, they will not be able to buy or sell (Rev 13:16-18), and will be persecuted in the Great Tribulation (Mt 24:21, 22). But, for the sake of believers, the suffering will be short.



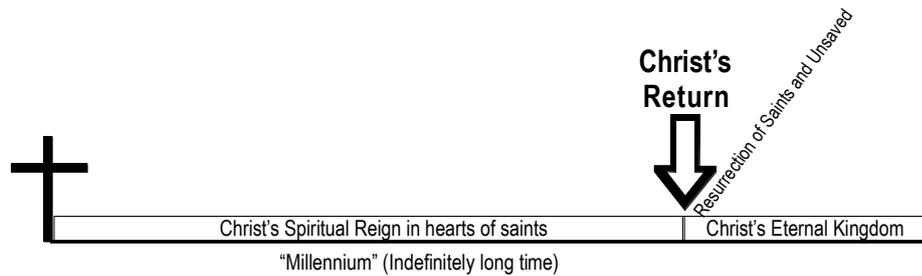
- Christ comes to resurrect the dead saints and rapture the living saints (1 Thes 4:16-17). They will be given perfect glorified bodies and enjoy sweet fellowship with Christ at a grand marriage supper in heaven (Rev 19:7-9).
- God will send plagues of judgments to punish the whole world (7 bowl judgments in Rev 16). But the False Prophet and the Antichrist will perform miracles by Satan's power.
- The biggest military battle in history will be launched against Israel at the Battle of Armageddon. Just when everything looks bleak, Christ will return (2 Thes 2:8) to save Israel as King of Kings and Lord of lords, and defeat the enemies (Rev 19:15-16).
- The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be cast in the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).
- Satan will be bound for a thousand years in the bottomless pit (Rev 20:1-3).
- During the Millennium, Jesus will rule on earth with the raptured and resurrected saints from Jerusalem (Isa 2:1-4; 1 Cor 6:2, 2 Tim 2:12, Rev 5:10, 20:4). There will be perfect peace, order and harmony. Even in nature, lions will eat straw and children will play with snakes (Isa 6:8, 65:25). All Israel shall be saved and will worship Christ in a glorious temple (Ezek 40-46).

- At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released to stir up one final rebellion against God, and will be defeated and cast into the Lake of Fire and brimstone to burn forever (Rev 20:7-15).
- All the unsaved dead shall be resurrected, judged and cast into the same lake.
- The old heaven and the old earth will be destroyed with fervent heat.
- A new heaven and new earth will appear together with the new Jerusalem city & new garden of Eden where God's people will dwell forever with the Lord.

c. **Postmillennialism.** Christ will return after the thousand years.



d. **Amillennialism.** There is no literal one thousand years.



5. **A NEW HEAVEN & A NEW EARTH** [Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible]

- The future church is a new creation** (Rev 21:1-22:17; Isa 65:17). Rev 21:1-2 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."
- The glorified church returns to Paradise** (a new garden of Eden, Rev 22:1-3).

6. **WHAT SHOULD WE DO?**

- Warn others.** God has commanded us to warn unbelievers to flee from God's judgment. When the Antichrist subdue the world to worship him, people will be deluded into receiving his mark on their right hands and foreheads. We must warn others the End is near. Exhort them to trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour & Lord (John 3:16).
- Serve Christ.** Jesus is "Alpha and Omega", the beginning and the end (Rev 22:13). He says, "behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Rev 22:12). Let us motivate ourselves to daily live for Christ, serve Him well, knowing that His kingdom is coming soon!

