

Arbor Foundations
20 – What will Come in the Last Days?
Mar 3, 2019

Relevant Chapters of the Confession

Chapter 31: Of the State of Man after Death and of the Resurrection of the Dead

1- The bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption;¹ but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them.² The souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness, are received into paradise, where they are with Christ, and behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies;³ and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell; where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day;⁴ besides these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

[1] Gen. 3:19; Acts 13:36 [2] Eccles. 12:7 [3] Luke 23:43; 2 Cor.

5:1, 6, 8; Phil. 1:23; Heb. 12:23 [4] Jude 6, 7; 1 Peter 3:19; Luke 16:23, 24

2- At the last day, such of the saints as are found alive, shall not sleep, but be changed;⁵ and all the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies, and none other;⁶ although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.⁷

[5] 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:17 [6] Job 19:26, 27 [7] 1 Cor. 15:42, 43

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.⁸

[8] Acts 24:15; John 5:28, 29; Phil. 3:21

Chapter 32: Of the Last Judgment

1- God has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ;¹ to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father; in which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged,² but likewise all persons that have lived upon the 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.³

[1] Acts 17:31; John 5:22, 27 [2] 1 Cor. 6:3; Jude 6 [3] 2 Cor. 5:10; Eccles. 12:14; Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:10, 12; Matt. 25:32-46

- 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 eternal damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient;⁴ for then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and glory with everlasting rewards, in the presence of the Lord; but the wicked, who do not know God, and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast aside into everlasting torments,⁵ and punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.⁶

[4] Rom. 9:22, 23 [5] Matt. 25:21, 34; 2 Tim. 4:8 [6] Matt. 25:46; Mark 9:48; 2 Thess. 1:7-10

- 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,⁷ and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity,⁸ so will he have the day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come,⁹ and may ever be prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus; come quickly.¹⁰ Amen.

[7] 2 Cor. 5:10, 11 [8] 2 Thess. 1:5-7 [9] Mark 13:35-37; Luke 12:35-40 [10] Rev. 22:20

Key Ideas / Biblical Basis

Orienting Issues

- 1- Eschatology is inherently practical
 - a. I Corinthians 15:50-58 Our future resurrection should make us steadfast.
 - b. I Thessalonians 4:13-18 In the midst of grief, we are to encourage each other with the end restoration of all, including those dead before us.
 - c. I Peter 4:7-11 The end of all things compels us to be self-controlled and sober-minded.

- d. II Peter 3:10-13 Since the Lord will remake the world, Peter asks how we ought to live in godliness and self-control.
- 2- Biblical speech on eschatology is not intended to create sophisticated maps of the end times.
 - a. Parallel to previous discussion of the Christological relation between the testaments. Remembering from our previous discussion of the OT as the messianic searchlight for the NT the idea if that the OT revealed the Messiah such that he could be identified in the times of Jesus.
Luke 24:13-27, John 1:45
 - b. It would seem that in understandings of eschatology we are given images that form a portrait not to give us a direct prediction of future events down to individual figures referencing certain features of books like Revelation, but enough of a portrait to be able to identify the times when they come.
- 3- Biblical speech on eschatology is largely figurative.
 - a. In a narrative text, one would expect a one-to-one correspondence to reality. The text says that Jesus died and you understand that Jesus died.



- b. In apocalyptic literature, the primary literature of eschatological texts, the author is not trying to write a reality that corresponds to an image that in some way portrays reality. Therefore, one should not expect that an actual dragon comes to devour the baby as a woman gives birth, nor



Heaven and the Resurrection

Heaven is the intermediate state of sinless bliss where the believer worships God waiting for the Resurrection so that he can be fully clothed.

- 1- Heaven is the place of God’s dwelling in this present age. “Heaven is the place where God most fully makes known his presence to bless.” ~ Grudem Isa 66:1, Matt 6:9, I Pet. 3:22
- 2- Heaven is not just a state of mind of blissful pleasure, but a specific place which people have seen and have been taken up.
II Kings 2:1, Luke 16:19-31, Acts 1:9-11, 7:55-56,
- 3- Heaven is also the place where presently dead saints reside with Jesus as they await the resurrection of their bodies and re-creation of this world.

Luke 23:43, II Cor. 5, Phil. 1:23

- 4- The bodily resurrection of Jesus becomes the first fruits of the resurrection of all our bodies which indeed is the basis of our hope.

John 5:28-29, Acts 24:15, I Cor. 15, Phil. 3:21, I Thess. 4:17, I Peter 1:3-4

- 5- At the time of the resurrection, we Christians will no longer be within Heaven, but be reigning with Christ forever in the New Heavens and the New Earth, where there is no more sin or the effects of the curse because of sin.

Isa 65-66, Dan. 7:13-18, John 14:1-11, Acts 3:21, Rom. 8:19-21, II Pet. 3:1-13, Rev. 19-22

Hell and Judgment

At his return, Christ will finally judge all people who do not believe in him into an eternal lake of fire called Hell. As Grudem notes, “Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.”

- 1- God’s holiness demands that he cannot live in the presence of sin; therefore, at the final day, all sin and sinful people will be cast out of his present.

Hab. 1:13, II Thess. 1:7-10

- 2- Those who are cast out are cast into an unquenchable lake of fire, called Hell, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Ps. 34:19-21, Matt. 8:13, 13:50, 25:30, Mark 9:43-48, Luke 16:23, 28, Acts 25:24, Rom. 2:5-7, Heb. 9:27, 10:27, II Pet. 3:7, Rev. 14:10, 20:11-15, 21:8

- a. Some would like to dispel this notion of Hell by pointing out that apocalyptic literature speaks in terms of images and there is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship between text and event. But if this is the case (admittedly likely), the reality will be worse than the image, not better, just as we anticipate the New Creation to be more amazing than the images let us know.

- b. Apostate angels will certainly be placed into this lake of fire, but so too will all unbelievers. Divine punishment is not reserved for egregious sins, but all who in pride reject the Messiah.

Ps. 34:19-21, Ecc. 12:14, Matt. 8:29, John 3:19-21, John 5:24, I Cor. 6:3, Jude 6

- c. There seems to be a biblical basis for the possibility of degrees within this punishment based off of each one’s deeds.

Matt 11:22-24, Luke 12:47-48, 20:17, 20:47, Rev. 20:12-13

- 3- Unlike heaven, hell is not an intermediate state, but those who are cast there will undergo eternal condemnation.

Dan. 12:2, Matt. 18:8, 25:46, Mark 9:47-48, Luke 16:19-31, II Thess. 1:7-10, Rev. 14:10, 20:10

- 4- The agent for the judgment of these individuals is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who will judge the whole world, everyone according to his deeds.

Matt 25:31-46, John 5:26-27, Acts 10:42, 17:30-31, II Cor. 5:10, II Tim. 4:1

- 5- Scripture is clear that this is to the glory of God such that God’s people will indeed praise the Lord for his divine acts of judgement/divine wrath.
Isa. 25:9-11, Rom 9:22-23

The Millennium and Christ’s Return

Jesus Christ will return in victory to slay the dragon and get the girl, his church.

- 1- The Outline of Revelation 20-22
 - a. Pre-chapter 20: The Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16:16, taught in anticipation in Zechariah 12:10-14
 - b. 20:1-6 The Millennial reign of Jesus with binding of Satan in v. 1-2
 - c. 20:7 The release of Satan
 - d. 20:8-10 The Battle of Gog and Magog anticipated in Ezekiel 38-39
 - e. 20:11-15 Christ’s judgment
 - f. 21:1-22:5 New Creation
 - g. 22:6-21 Epilogue
- 2- Premillennialism

Premillennialists believe that Christ will return before the thousand year reign.

 - a. Classic premillennialism
 - i. Church age continues until a time of tribulation comes. After which, Christ will return to establish his millennial kingdom.
 - ii. Most take the millennium as a literal thousand years though some treat it as a figure of speech for an indefinite period of time.
 - iii. Christ’s people will reign with him on earth in their resurrected bodies for this thousand year period.
 - iv. After the thousand years, Satan is released to join with the rebellious among the people to fight against Christ, but they will be decisively defeated as the Lord brings in the New Creation by his Word.
 - b. Dispensational premillennialism
 - i. Christ’s return is both premillennial, and before the time of tribulation (pretribulational).
 - ii. When Christ comes before the tribulation the people of Christ are raptured to be with him. He then returns a second time to Earth to reign with the Saints for a thousand years.
 - iii. This allows for a distinction between Israel and the Church as the Church is raptured before the salvation of Jews during the tribulation.
- 3- Postmillennialism

Postmillennialists believe that Christ will return after his people have heralded in the kingdom on earth.

- a. The church ushers in the kingdom by the spread of the gospel such that a greater population of the people know the gospel and society begins to function as it should.
 - b. Millennium will last for a long period of time, and then Christ will come, such that the term millennium is still a figure of speech used to describe an indefinite time period.
 - c. Postmillennialism is very optimistic about the spread of the gospel and the progress of the culture of the world (but II Tim. 3:13?)
- 4- Amillennialism
- Amillennials believe there is no literal thousand year reign.*
- a. “Amillennial postmillennial”

The church age is the millennium such that Christ comes at the end of the figurative “1000 year” period.

 - i. 20:1-6 describes the current church age, where Satan has been bound to allow the church to spread the gospel to all nations.
 - ii. Christ reigns in the hearts of his people here on earth.
 - iii. Thousand years is simply a figure of speech to describe God’s perfect reign in his timing.
 - iv. Christ will return and the dead will be raised, the righteous to eternal life and the wicked to eternal condemnation.
 - b. “Amillennial premillennial”

Christ returns before the figurative “1000 year” period, which is in fact the New Creation.

 - i. The OT only ever features a single cycle of an eschatological battle followed by one period of restoration.
 - ii. In line with portraying the events through images, rather than one-on-one correspondence, apocalyptic literature tends to recapitulate¹ the events with multiple images.
Ezek. 37, 40-48, Zech. 1-6, Dan. 2, 7, Rev. 6, 8-9, 16
 - iii. The battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16 is described with language from the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38-39; the battle of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20 is described with language from the battle of Armageddon from Zechariah 12.
 - iv. In this view it is one sequence listed twice with the release of Satan being a merely “literary release” allowing the recapitulation to occur.
 - v. Ergo, the battle of Armageddon and the battle of Gog and Magog are the same, and so too are the millennium reign and the New Creation. Christ comes and reigns with his saints forever in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

¹ “Summarize and state again the main points of.”

So What? – Living in light of the end

See “Orienting Issues” #1.

Paradigm shift: knowing that this world is not our home transforms the way we view our finances or creaturely comfort. We no longer live our lives in terms of a bucket list of the best joys we can receive now, knowing how much more joy awaits us later.

The end of the Christian life provides us reason to persevere, knowing that our hope is secure and we need not fret about our circumstances pushing against us.

The certainty of punishment of the wicked should compel us both to stand in awe of God’s holiness as well as to motivate us to share the gospel with all those around us.

For Further Study

Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology. (Part 6)*

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology. (Chapters 54-57)*

Waldron, Samuel. *The End Times Made Simple.*