

Eschatology

Personal Doctrinal Statement with Scriptural Support:

I believe that the souls of those who die in Christ leave their bodies and pass immediately into the presence of the Lord in the intermediate heaven, until such time as Christ returns to the earth to gather the living in Christ, when they will be reunited with their bodies in the rapture of believers. Those who die without Christ are conscious of the separation from God and await their judgment at the throne of God, where they will be thrown into the lake of fire, body and soul. (Luke 16:19–26; 23:42; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 20:11–15)

I believe that according to the command of our Lord Jesus, the church will continue to proclaim the gospel to all tribes, tongues and nations until it reaches the ends of the earth. (Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20)

After this message has been heard by the peoples of the world, Jesus Christ will come in the clouds to take believers, both living and dead, to heaven in bodily form. His removal of the church from the earth will function as an act of mercy, by removing them from the place where God will pour out his wrath concerning sin during the Day of the Lord. (Revelation 3:10)

After the rapture of believers from the earth, the Antichrist's activity will increase and God's wrath will be poured out upon the earth. Men and women who come to faith during this time will face increased persecution at the hands of the Antichrist and his followers. The entire earth will feel the influence of the Antichrist as he comes to power through persuasion and domination of the peoples on the earth, and the earth will feel the outpouring of God's wrath in both natural and supernatural events. God's wrath will be so great that it will devastate most of the world, for as Jesus said, "For then there will be great suffering unlike anything that has happened from the beginning of the world until now, or ever will happen. And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved." This time of wrath will be cut short only to save those who have come to faith during this time. (Matt 24:21-22, Revelation 4-18, Daniel 7 & 8)

At the conclusion of this time of the Great Tribulation, Christ will return with an army of the saints in bodily form, and will establish a Millennial kingdom upon the earth, where the nation of Israel will enjoy the full fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and his descendants. Christ will rule in this kingdom in the kingly role of the Messiah that Israel had been expecting in the first century, Satan will

be bound and imprisoned, and a time of great faith renewal will expand to all the peoples of the earth. (Isaiah 11:9, 19, 24:21-23, 60; Daniel 2, 7:27; Ezek. 37:21-28; Revelation 19-20:6)

After 1,000 years of Christ's Millennial rule, the earth will once again fall into conflict, precipitated by the release of the devil from his imprisonment, where unbelievers will rise up against believers. In this final rebellion against God, Christ will rise up and bring all the world to a close: resurrecting all the dead to stand before the throne of judgment and receive a sentence to eternal life or eternal punishment based on their faith toward Christ. (Revelation 20:7-15, Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Corinthians 5:10)

When the dead are condemned to eternal punishment, including Satan and the evil spiritual beings, God will purge His creation of sin and make it new once again. He will redeem it fully as He redeems believers, returning it to a state similar to that in which the garden of Eden first existed. He will unite heaven and earth in this new created world, establishing a city of His creation as the new Jerusalem, and making His dwelling place among mankind. In this final state, men and women will enjoy full access to God and true relationship with each other, for all eternity. (Isaiah 65:17-25, Revelation 21)

These things to come are of a mysterious nature, always being revealed to men with limited understanding and sinful tendencies. Though we have sought and established patterns and timelines for the events of the future, we admit that what God has prepared for us is likely beyond our present knowledge, and should be viewed as information given primarily to increase our hope and guide our actions in the present. The subjects of eschatology are meant to increase the stewardship of grace that God has given us, and for which we will be held accountable at our final judgment before Christ. (Matthew 19:19-21; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 14:2-12)