

Systematic Theology, Lesson 40: Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things, Part 6

1. Review

- a. Purpose of eschatology: Eschatology is not an end in itself but should promote our growth in Christ.
- b. Division of eschatology: Eschatology is divided into two major sections: personal eschatology and general eschatology.
 - i. Personal (or individual) eschatology
 1. Physical death
 2. Intermediate state
 - ii. General (or cosmic) eschatology
 1. Return of Christ (second advent)
 2. Millennium
 3. Rapture
 4. Resurrection and judgment
 5. Eternal punishment and new heavens and earth (eternal state)

2. Resurrection

- a. Nature of resurrection
 - i. Christ's resurrection is the _____ and _____ of future resurrection.¹
 1. **1 Cor 15:20:** But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.
 2. **Rom 8:11:** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also

¹ On the nature of Christ's resurrection, see: "Systematic Theology, Lesson 22: Christology, Part 5," lecture available at gracelakeville.org.

give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

- ii. The resurrected body (for believers) will be changed in four respects according to **1 Cor 15:42-44**: So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.
 1. Imperishable. Our present bodies are perishable, suffering from disease and death. But our resurrected bodies will be free from disease and death.
 2. Glorious. Our present bodies are dishonorable or unattractive. But our resurrected bodies will be glorious like Christ—radiant, shining, beautiful, and holy.
 3. Powerful. Our present bodies are weak, needing rest and relaxation. But our resurrected bodies will be powerful and strong.
 4. Spiritual. Our present bodies are natural, which means a part of the sin cursed world. But our resurrected bodies will be spiritual, which does not mean non-physical, but means no sinfulness, a body completely guided by the Holy Spirit.
- iii. Both _____ and _____ will be resurrected.
 1. **Dan 12:2**: Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.
 2. **John 5:28-29**: Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.
- b. Timing of resurrection: The timing of the resurrection was discussed in “Systematic Theology, Lesson 38: Eschatology, Part 4.”
- c. **GCBC Doctrinal Statement** (“Last Things,” subsection “Death,” paragraph 2)

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life, and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment.

3. Judgment

- a. Necessity of final judgment: In one sense, judgment is already. **John 3:18**: “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” So why is a final judgment needed?
- b. Purpose of final judgment²
 - i. To _____ the glory of God in justice toward unbelievers and mercy toward believers.
 - ii. To _____ rewards and punishments appropriate to what every person deserves.
 - iii. To _____ judgment on every human being for eternity either in the new heavens and earth or in “the lake of fire.”
- c. Subjects of final judgment³
 - i. Believers
 1. **Rom 14:10b, 12**: For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. . . . So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.
 2. **2 Cor 5:10**: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.
 - ii. Unbelievers
 1. **Rev 20:11-12**: Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the

² These three reasons are adapted from: Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 254.

³ Depending on a person’s Millennial view, some view the judgment of believers and unbelievers occurring at the same time. Others view the judgment of believers and unbelievers occurring at different times. For more on Millennial views, see: Dan Burrus, “Systematic Theology, Lesson 38: Eschatology, Part 4,” lecture available at gracelakeville.org.

small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

d. Judge of the final judgment

i. God the Father

1. **1 Pet 1:17**: If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*.
2. **Rom 14:10**: But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

ii. God the Son

1. **Acts 17:31**: because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man [i.e., Jesus] whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.
2. **2 Tim 4:8**: in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord [Jesus], the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

e. Standard of final judgment

i. People will be judged based on the _____ of God they have received.

1. **Matt 11:20-22**: Then He [Jesus] began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in *the day of judgment* than for you."
2. **Luke 12:47-48**: And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many

lashes, but the one who did not know *it*, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

- ii. People will be judged based on their _____ to Jesus Christ.
 - 1. **John 3:36:** He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.
 - 2. **John 5:24:** Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

- iii. People will be judged according to their _____.
 - 1. **Matt 16:27:** For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.
 - 2. **Rom 2:6:** who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.
 - 3. **Rev 22:12:** Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.
 - 4. Why will people be judged according to their works if salvation is by grace? Answer: Because of the necessary connection between salvation/faith and works.
 - a. **Gal 5:6:** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.
 - b. **Matt 7:21:** Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*.
 - c. Therefore, one will really be judged upon a true faith which is evidenced by works.

f. Significance of the final judgment

- i. Final judgment shows that a final day of reckoning will take place.

- ii. Final judgment enables us to _____.
 - iii. Final judgment will show that one's relationship with Jesus is determinative for one's salvation or condemnation.
 - iv. Final judgment provides motivation for good deeds.
 - v. Final judgment provides motivation for evangelism.
- g. **GCBC Statement of Faith** ("God the Son," paragraph 12)

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all mankind:

- a. Believers
- b. Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return
- c. Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne

4. Eternal punishment (eternal state of unbelievers)

- a. Denials of eternal conscious punishment
 - i. Universalism: every person without exception will eventually be saved. This view is chiefly held by Unitarian Universalists.
 - ii. Annihilationism: unbelievers will be annihilated upon death. This view is held by some Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses.
- b. Truth of eternal conscious punishment
 - i. Jesus
 1. **Matt 18:8-9:** If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.
 2. **Matt 25:46:** These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

3. **Mark 9:43:** If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire.

ii. Apostles

1. **2 Thess 1:7-9:** and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.
2. **2 Pet 2:17:** These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.
3. **Jude 13:** wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.
4. **Rev 20:14-15:** Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

c. **GCBC Statement of Faith** ("Last Things," subsection "The Judgment of the Lost")

We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment, they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire.

5. New heavens and earth (eternal state of believers)

a. Fact of a new heaven and earth

- i. **Isa 65:17:** For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.
- ii. **Isa 66:22:** "For just as the new heavens and the new earth Which I make will endure before Me," declares the LORD, "So your offspring and your name will endure."

b. Will the present earth be annihilated or renewed? _____.

- i. The word for “new” (καίνοϛ) in **2 Pet 3:13** (cf. **2 Pet 3:10**) and **Rev 21:1** is not new in time or origin but new in _____ or _____.
1. **2 Pet 3:13**: But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.
 2. **Rev 21:1**: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea.
- ii. **Romans 8:20-21** suggests a renewal not annihilation. “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”
- iii. The similarities between the present earth and new earth. We will have physical bodies, albeit, resurrected bodies (see discussion above re: resurrection), in the new earth.
- c. **GCBC Statement of Faith** (“Last Things,” subsection “Eternity”)

We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers, the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells. Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another. Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever.