

Understanding the End Times

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The Bible's Eschatology

- “Age” (= Greek, *aiw'n*), refers to both time and space. “World-age”.
 - “This present evil age” (Gal. 1:4)
 - The Bible considers eternity to be unending time, not an escape from time.
 - Prophecies that involve space & time need not be fulfilled prior to “eternity”.
- The Bible's Two-Age Terminology
 - “whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, *either in this age or in the age to come*” (Mat 12:32).
 - He will “receive a hundredfold *now in this time*, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, *and in the age to come eternal life*” (Mk 10:30).
 - “For the *sons of this world* are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the *sons of light*” (Luk 16:8).
 - “*The sons of this age* marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to *that age and to the resurrection from the dead* neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luk 20:34-36).
 - “Do not be conformed to *this world*, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Rom 12:2).
 - “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater *of this age*? Has not God made foolish the wisdom *of the world*?” (1Co 1:20).
 - “Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away... None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1Co 2:6, 8).

The Bible's Eschatology

- The Bible's Two-Age Terminology

- Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise *in this age*, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom *of this world* is folly with God" (1Co 3:18-19).
- "The god *of this world* has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2Co 4:4).
- "who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from *the present evil age*, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal 1:4).
- "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only *in this age* but also *in the one to come*" (Eph 1:21).
- "following the course *of this world*, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2).
- "As for the rich *in this present age*, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God... thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation *for the future*, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life" (1Ti 6:17, 19).
- "training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives *in the present age*, waiting for *our blessed hope*, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Tit 2:12-13).
- "have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb 6:5).

Biblical Eschatology

- Reflections on the Two Ages
 - Language used throughout New Testament, including explicit language (this present age and the age to come) and related phraseology.
 - New Testament eschatology is found not merely (or even mainly) in future prophecy. Found throughout the “normal” teaching of the NT.
 - The Two Ages provides a basic “floor plan” for biblical eschatology.
 - Shows why eschatology is so important: it permeates all Christian teaching.

Three Basic Propositions*

1. “This age” and “the age to come” exhaust all time, including future eternity.
 - “all time” = “this age” + “the age to come”

“whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, *either in this age or in the age to come*” (Mt. 12:32).

“whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of *an eternal sin*” (Mk. 3:29).
 - When did “this present age” begin? Creation
 - Characterized by creation ordinances, like marriage (Lk. 20:34) and Satan’s post-fall reign (Gal. 1:4; 2 Cor. 4:4).
 - The two ages are consecutive, with no time frame in between. No intermediate period of time between them and no time after the age to come.

Three Basic Propositions

2. The two ages are *qualitatively different*, both in terms of human history and individual experience.

- “This age” does not evolve or otherwise progress into “the age to come.”
- The present age is the natural age; the age to come is the resurrection age.

“The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Lk. 20:34-36).

Luke 20:27-40

This Age	Age to Come
Marriage	No Marriage
Death & Dying	No Death & Dying
Natural Men	Resurrection Men
Righteous & Evil Co-exist	Only the Worthy (Sons of God)

Three Basic Propositions

2. Qualitatively Different

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away” (Mt. 13:24-25) “The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil” (Mt. 13:38-39).

“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mt. 13:43).

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-44

This Age	Age to Come
Mixed Wheat & Weeds (sons of the kingdom vs. sons of the evil one)	Only Wheat (sons of the kingdom)
Natural Condition	Glorified Condition (“shining as the sun”).

Three Basic Propositions

3. The two ages are divided by the judgment of the wicked and the resurrection of the righteous. Judgment day ends “this age” and inaugurates “the age to come”.
 - Age to come = age of the resurrection
 - “those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead” (Lk. 20:35).
 - When does resurrection occur? Return of Christ.
 - “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power” (1Co 15:22-24).
 - “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (1Co 15:51-52).
 - “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1Th 4:16-17).

Three Basic Propositions

3. The two ages are divided by the judgment of the wicked and the resurrection of the righteous. Judgment day ends “this age” and inaugurates “the age to come”.

- When does final judgment occur? Immediately upon Christ’s return

“then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power” (1Co 15:22-24).

Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mat 24:30-31).

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (Mat 25:31-32).

- In the age to come, we receive eternal life, which we receive at Christ’s return

“Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your master” (Mt. 25:21).

“Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt. 25:34).

“and in the age to come eternal life” (Mk. 10:30).

3 Basic Propositions

3. The two ages are divided by the judgment of the wicked and the resurrection of the righteous. Judgment day ends “this age” and inaugurates “the age to come”.
 - Christ’s Second coming consummates *this age* and inaugurates *the age to come*
 - “This present age” ends in “the appearing of... Jesus Christ”
 - Jesus’ coming ushers in “our blessed hope”

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives *in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*”
(Tit 2:11-13).
 - Three Basic Propositions concerning the Two Ages:
 1. “This age” and “the age to come” exhaust all time, with not interval between and no time after.
 2. The two ages are qualitatively different.
 3. The two ages are divided by the judgment of the wicked and the resurrection of the righteous.

The Two Ages

- *Simplicity*: A simple structure for history that is taught clearly throughout the New Testament. Grasping the two ages places you ahead of many who major on “prophecy”
- *Similarity*: Which millennial view is similar?
 - *Premillennialism*: calls for 1000-year period of time between Christ’s return and the final judgment. After Christ’s return, evil men and good men co-exist on earth.
 - Where is premillennialism in the Bible’s two-age eschatology? Nowhere.
 - This is why premillennial eschatology is always confusing: “Because of the system they have inherited... simply because it is impossible to make consistent with the clearest and simplest biblical passages” (Sam Waldron, 44).
 - *Amillennialism* or *Postmillennialism*: Does the age to come arrive via gradual advancement and kingdom expansion (postmil) or by radical intervention at Christ’s return (amil)?
 - The *Amillennial* position fits best with the Bible’s basic two-age eschatology.
- *Supernaturalism*: “Biblical eschatology involves an emphatic supernaturalism. No gradual process can bring the fulfillment for which the bible teaches us to hope. The theory of evolution is of no help. There can be no evolution into the age to come... Even the improvements in men and in the world wrought by the preaching of God’s Word will never themselves transform men into the glory of the resurrection. Only almighty, divine, and supernatural intervention can ever bring about the glory of the age to come – that is the Christian hope” (Sam Waldron, 44).