

Christ Presbyterian Church

Foundations Class

Lesson 11

From There He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
Eschatology: Part I

Introduction: Why has Christ's return has been eclipsed in modern life?

1. Reaction to "doom-watching"
2. Modern skepticism
3. Illusions of self-security in Modern technology.
4. Worldly mindedness: Things of heaven seem less glorious in light of material advantages

I. The Second-Coming: Non-Negotiables

A. The exact time is not known, but Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. (Acts 1:11, 2 Pt. 3:10)

Mt. 24:36, But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man...

B. The world will be busy with life as usual.

Mt. 24:38, For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark.

C. The nature of Christ's return will be physical, personal, visible and triumphant

1 John 3:2, it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see Him as He is.

Acts 1:11 He will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven

Mt. 24:30, They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and glory.

D. He will gather His people together to be with Him forever.

1 Thess. 4:16ff, For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive who are left will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air and so we will be with the Lord forever.

Mt.24:31, 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.

II. Summary of Millennial Views:

The "millennium" refers to the "thousand year" reign of Christ. C.f., Rev. 19-20.

A. Post-millennialism

1. Kingdom of God is primarily a present reality.
2. Expect a long period (not necessarily a literal 1,000 yr. period) of earthly peace and Expect conversion of all nations prior to Christ's return.
3. Gradual growth of the Kingdom by the continuing spread of the gospel.
4. At the end of the millennium there will be a time of apostasy and flare-up of evil in connection with the coming of the antichrist.
5. The millennium will end with the personal, bodily return of Christ.

B. Pre-millennialism

1. Earthly reign of Christ initiated by Christ's return. (*Pre-mil.*)
2. The millennium will be dramatically and cataclysmically inaugurated by the 2nd coming.
3. Great tribulation will immediately precede the millennium.

Note: Dispensational Pre-millennialism adds the notion of "dispensations" (e.g., the "age of the church", "the age of Israel") and is also more literalistic in its biblical interpretation.

C. A-millennialism

1. Like both postmil. and historic premil., amil. hold that a faithful reading of scripture isn't necessarily a literalistic reading of scripture. "Literal" and "accurate" are not synonymous.
2. Like both postmil. and some historic premil., amil. believes the millennium and tribulation are symbolic and not necessarily a literal 1,000 year period.
3. The present age consists both of the millennial reign of Christ and the tribulation simultaneously. The kingdom of God has come partially now but not yet fully consummated. That is, the binding of Satan is taking place for the gospel to have any progress at all, but Satan still is still active as the "prince of this world."
4. The second coming of Christ will inaugurate the final age and state for both believers and non believers such that the general resurrection and judgment will happen immediately and with no intervening period of time.

III. Resulting Conceptions of the Kingdom of God.

A. Pre-Millennialism/fundamentalism. Tends to see the kingdom of God as totally or mainly future. May lead to pessimism about social and personal change. Leads to a "fortress mentality" of pulling out of the world.

1. Low view of culture. Rather than being agents through which God can exercise his rule in culture, we must isolate ourselves from culture, praying and waiting for the return of Christ.
2. Tends to be fatalistic regarding this world and triumphant regarding the world to come.
3. Radical discontinuity between present and future.
4. Therefore leads to a low view of education, low view of political action, etc.

B. Post-Millennialism/Pentecostalism. Tends to see the kingdom as already present. May lead to an optimism about breaking down

the strongholds of corporate or individual evil and forgets the incompleteness of the Kingdom.

1. Leads to a naiveté regarding the sin in the heart, leading them to trust too quickly in the divine origin of their own impulses.

a. Naiveté regarding church power

b. Naiveté regarding personal impulses

2. Expects quick and simplistic solutions for complex problems, leading to an undeveloped view of suffering. Faith is the solution to everything.

C. Post-Millennialism/liberalism

1. Tends to deny that the "kingdom" is "from God" rather than from "man"

2. Confuses "gradual" with "anti supernatural"

3. Leads to a strong trust in education or politics to usher in the kingdom.

D. Amillennialism/Reformed. Sees Kingdom as a tension between the "already" and "not yet." There is both optimism and pessimism.

1. Seriousness about sin and hope in grace.

2. There is continuity as well as discontinuity between this age and the next.

3. High view of culture, art, education, etc.

4. All of our historical judgments must be provisional.

IV. Implications: warning and encouragement

1 Thess. 4:18, *Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

1 John 3:3, And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

2 Cor. 5:vs. 1, For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

vs. 11, Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others, but we ourselves are well known to God.

vs. 16, From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view... so if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, everything old has passed away, see, everything has become new!

What difference would this make in our lives if taken seriously?