

Christ Presbyterian Church

Foundations Class

Lesson 12

From There He shall come to judge the living and the dead

Eschatology: Part II

Introduction:

Any quest for meaning today must grapple with questions concerning the future and the "last things." To answer the question, "Where is it all heading" is to discover what life is all about now.

I. The Meaning of History:

A. God is the Lord of History (Acts 4:27-28; 17:26; Eph.1:11). History is the progressive story of God being glorified in the works of redemption.

B. Christ is the Center of History (Heb.1:1-3, Rev. 5:9)

C. All History is moving toward the new heavens and new earth and Christ's consummate rule Eph. 1:9-10; Col.19-20; Rev. 21:1

D. The "New Age" has already been ushered in but is not yet completed Eph.2:5-6; Col.1:13; Rom. 12:2 (contrast between two ages); Phil. 1:6

E. The present age is a time of tension. Redemption has been revealed, but it is not yet consummated.

II. Implications of the Meaning of History:

- A. The present activity of the Church is one of missions (Mt. 28:16ff)
- B. The continuing tensions between the "already" and "not yet."
 - 1. A growth in both the Kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.
 - 2. An optimism and pessimism regarding this world, although our ultimate understanding of history is optimistic. (Mt.13:24-30, 36-43, wheat and tares)
- C. All of our historical judgments must be provisional.
 - 1. While we know the ultimate outcome of history, we don't know the relatively specific purpose and value of particular events in history. All historical judgments this side of the final judgment must be relative, tentative, and provisional.
 - 2. We can know only two things ultimately:
 - a. That all of history will be for the glory of God. (Rom 9:23)
 - b. That all of history is for the salvation of the elect. (broadly defined as conversion and sanctification) (Rom. 8:28)
- D. There is continuity as well as discontinuity between this age and the next.

Note Heidelberg Catechism # 58 "... since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal..." (1 Cor. 3:14; Rev.14:13, etc.)

"The kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men, and...this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end

of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history and the consummation at the end of history."

-George Ladd

One who is a believer in Jesus Christ, therefore, is in the kingdom of God at the present time, enjoying its blessings and sharing its responsibilities. At the same time, he realizes that the kingdom is present now only in a provisional and incomplete state, and therefore he looks forward to its final consummation at the end of the age. Because the kingdom is both present and future, we may say that the kingdom is now hidden to all except those who have faith in Christ, but that some day it shall be totally revealed so that even its enemies will finally have to recognize its presence and bow before its rule. (Lk.13:20-21)

-Anthony Hoekema

III. Living with the tension of Biblical Eschatology:

1. The tension characterizes what we commonly call the "signs of the times," for there will continue to be "wars and rumors of wars," "earthquakes, famines."
2. The people of God are involved in this tension. Christians are new creatures in Christ, yet still imperfect sinners. It should affect our self image.
3. The tension should be an incentive for responsible Christian living. The relationship between the already and the not yet is not one of antithesis but rather one of continuity.
4. The tension helps us to understand the role of suffering in the lives of believers. Suffering is a means of bringing in the future kingdom. It is a concrete manifestation of the "not yet."
5. The tension affects our attitude toward culture. While we should not equate the kingdom of God with culture, culture is not unrelated to the Kingdom. There is continuity as well as

discontinuity between this world and the next.... Grace does not destroy nature but restores it."

7. Present or future Kingdom of God is not one of invisible or visible, but impartiality and completeness.

Now: Enjoy the rights and privileges of Christ's Laws, government, sacraments and mission as in the visible Church. (albeit imperfect and fallible)

Not yet: Consist of "land" and "all peoples" (heaven)

IV. Application

How would this view of eschatology affect our lives today? Our decisions? Our expectations? Our attitudes?

