

CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

—
Wednesday Night Series on Eschatology
Westminster Presbyterian Church

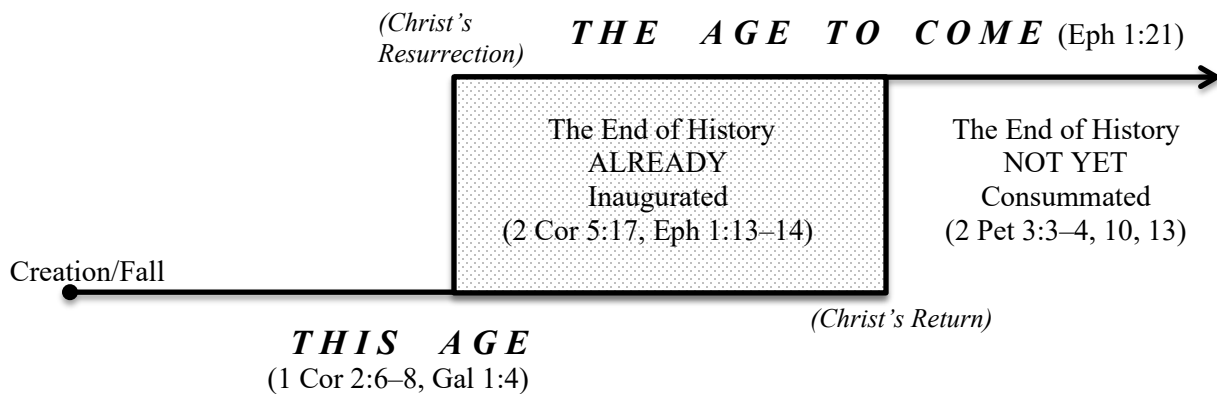
“[Christ] is everywhere...the central dominating factor of a new order of affairs, in fact nothing less than the originator and representative of a new world-order.” – G. Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 73.

I. Review and Introduction

- A. From the Greek term *eschatos* [‘last’], *eschatology* refers to the “doctrine of the last things.”
- B. Biblical eschatology does not refer to a mere appendix to history, but to God’s goal for creation from the very beginning: God’s glory revealed in an *unbreakable* bond of fellowship with a holy people in a holy place under an obedient covenant representative!
- C. Biblical eschatology frames and defines the work of Christ after the fall.
- D. There is an increasingly rich disclosure of this one eschatological goal across the Old Testament era [esp. through “last days” prophecies], which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, *whether already or in the future*.

II. “This Age” vs. the “Age to Come”

- A. Paul divides human history into two consecutive, yet partially overlapping, world orders: first, “this age,” begun in Adam; and, second, its superseding, eschatological counterpart, “the age to come” inaugurated by Christ.



III. Christ in the Wilderness (Matt 3:16–4:11)

¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” ⁴ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

A. Temptation #1 – Stones to Bread (vv. 3–4)

³ And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴ But he answered, “It is written,

“‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” [Deut 8:3]

1. Q. When was the first time Satan used this tactic? Can you think of yet another time?

B. Temptation #2 – Pinnacle of the Temple (vv. 5–7)

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ [Ps 91:11] and “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” [Ps 91:12]

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” [Deut 6:16]

1. Q. Why is Satan’s second tactic so evil?
2. Q. How does Jesus respond?

C. Temptation #3 – Worship on the Mountain (vv. 8–11)

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

“‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” [Deut 6:13]

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

1. Q. How did this temptation strike directly at Christ’s mission?

“The breathtaking marvel is that Jesus refuses the very thing for which he has come, in order that, in gaining that for which he has come, he might crush the head of the serpent instead of bowing down at the serpent’s feet.” (S. Ferguson)

2. Q. How does Jesus’ respond? How does Matthew’s gospel end (Matt 28:16–17)?

IV. Conclusion

*Our fellow-sufferer yet retains
a fellow-feeling of our pains;
and still remembers in the skies
his tears, his agonies and cries.*

*In every pang that rends the heart
the Man of Sorrows has a part;
he sympathizes with our grief,
and to the sufferer sends relief.
- Michael Bruce*