

Jeff Applegate
Houston Christian University
December 5, 2022
Systematic Theology 5340
Dr. Chris Sneller

Doctrine of Eschatology

Eschatology is the study of last things or end times. Eschatology in the Christian faith is the process where God is working according to His plan to fix that which is broken, namely mankind. Eschatology includes not only the end times, but also includes action in the present time where God is working to accomplish His purpose.

The Fall of Mankind to the Present

The biblical narrative begins with God's creation of all things and mankind to rule over His creation, declaring it good.ⁱ Man chose to disobey God's commandⁱⁱ resulting in a curse separating man and all offspring from God.ⁱⁱⁱ Only God can redeem man from His curse and renew His creation from the result of man's disobedience.^{iv} God chose Abram and made a covenant to establish a great nation^v, He chose Moses to rescue the descendants of Abraham from captivity and give them the Law^{vi} and sacrificial system to experience the presence of God,^{vii} He chose David and made a covenant with David to raise up a descendant after him whereby God would establish His kingdom and he shall build a house for the Lord and the Lord will establish the throne of his kingdom forever,^{viii} and God sent His son, Jesus from the line of David^{ix}, fully man and fully divine to fulfill the Law^x through His death and resurrection providing a redemption plan to include all mankind.^{xi} At the beginning of Jesus ministry He announced, "the kingdom is now here."^{xii} Jesus declares, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." The present age, referred to as the Church Age^{xiii}, follows the resurrection of Jesus and the study of the end times to include the past, present and future events until the day of the Lord where God's work will be completed, and all His creation is restored.^{xiv}

Eschatology in the Future

While Jesus has established His kingdom and has given believers the Spirit, it will not be completely restored until He comes again.^{xv} Until the Day of the Lord, Jesus instructs believers to preach the gospel, make disciples, and equip them to follow all the Jesus commanded.^{xvi} The Apostle Paul tells us that the end times will be difficult, and Christians will be persecuted.^{xvii} We know that prior to the day of the Lord the gospel will be preached in the whole world. Today in the midst of persecution, the Spirit is leading a movement known as "Back to Jerusalem Movement," raising up millions of believers in China that share the vision to complete the sharing of gospel across the globe through central Asia, North Africa, and back to the Jews in Jerusalem.^{xviii}

The Scriptures describe future events to come. There is much scholarly debate to the exact order, timing, and detailed descriptions, but the following are events described by the apostles and are accepted by many Christians. The Apostle Paul describes Jesus descending from heaven to call up the dead in Christ to rise first and then those alive in Christ will be caught up together with them to meet Jesus in the clouds.^{xix} Following the believers in Christ being taken, a seven-year Tribulation period of God's judgment will occur.^{xx} This period of Tribulation will end with a great battle in Armageddon where the Lord will defeat the enemies of Jerusalem.^{xxi} Judgment is followed by the second coming of the Jesus and the defeat of Satan.^{xxii} Satan will be bound up and Jesus will reign on earth for 1,000 years.^{xxiii} Following the 1,000 year reign of Christ, Satan will be released to wage one more battle against the Lord and his army will be devoured by fire and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire and tormented forever.^{xxiv} The Apostle John describes the last judgment of those whose names were not written in the book of life by Christ on the Great White Throne casting them into an eternal fire.^{xxv} Then God will create a new heaven and new earth and a new Jerusalem where God will dwell with His people and be their God for all eternity.^{xxvi}

The Scripture reveals clues to future events but does not reveal all the details leaving believers and scholars to speculate and debate on end times. While opinions on exact timing of events differ, it is important for believers to focus our attention on Jesus, His sacrifice, defeat of death, resurrection and hope we have in His restoring creation upon His return. Scripture tells us that we do not know the day or the hour of the Lord's return.^{xxvii} Christians should live godly lives in the midst of persecution in anticipation of the coming day of the Lord.^{xxviii}

-
- ⁱ God created mankind in His own image, blessed them male and female, and commanded them to rule over all living things on the earth. Gen.1:27-28, At the completion of creation God declared all that He created as “very good.” Gen. 1:31.
- ⁱⁱ God commanded the man saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Gen. 2: 16-17.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Man’s disobedience resulted in a separation from relationship with God and a curse against all mankind for all time. Gen.3:9-11, Gen. 3:17-24.
- ^{iv} No man can redeem his brother or provide God an acceptable ransom. Ps. 49:7; By the disobedience of one mankind was cursed to die, so also by the obedience of One restores righteousness to many. Rom. 5:17-19.
- ^v God promises to make Abraham’s descendants as many as the stars. Gen. 15:4-6.
- ^{vi} The Law is given by God to Moses. Ex. 20:1-26.
- ^{vii} Passover is established and the blood of the lamb is a sign of rescue for the Lord’s chosen. Ex.12:1-27.
- ^{viii} The Lord’s promise to David is that his kingdom shall never end. 2 Chron. 7:18, Ps. 89:3-4, Jer. 33:14-17. David plans to build a permanent temple. 2 Sam. 7:1-7; God makes a covenant with David to raise up a descendant after him and establish his kingdom forever. 2 Sam.7:12-17.
- ^{ix} Matthew and Luke provide genealogy of Jesus. According to the promise, Jesus is a descendant of David. Matt. 1:1-25, Luke 3:23-38.
- ^x Jesus came to fulfill the Law. Matt. 5:17.
- ^{xi} God sent His son to save the world. Jn. 3:16-17.
- ^{xii} After the capture of John the Baptist Jesus declares, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Mk. 1:15; Jesus describes the kingdom in our midst. Lk. 17:21.
- ^{xiii} The church age follows Pentecost and is proclaimed by Jesus in Matt. 16:18 where He says, “I will build my church.”
- ^{xiv} God promises to restore His creation. Isa. 65:25, Rev. 21:1-5.
- ^{xv} Luke quotes the prophet Joel who prophesied in the last days God will pour forth His Spirit on all mankind and provide signs and wonders before the day of the Lord. Acts 2:17
- ^{xvi} Jesus commissions the apostles, Matt. 28:18-20; Paul instructs us in equipping the saints Eph. 4:12-16; Paul also tells us how we shall live in this present age anticipating the age to come. 2 Cor. 3 – 5.
- ^{xvii} The Apostle Paul lists characteristics of men during the end times who oppose the truth. 2 Tim. 3:1-9; He goes on to say that Christians will be persecuted. 2 Tim. 3:12; Other scripture that support suffering and persecution for those that follow Jesus. Matt. 5:10-12, Mark 8:34 – 9:1, Rom. 6:1-14, Rom. 8:17-30, 2 Cor. 4:7-12, Gal. 2:20, 1 Thess. 2:14, 1 Pet.2:19-20.
- ^{xviii} Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Academic, 2007), p. 237.
- ^{xix} Paul answers the questions about those who have died. Because Jesus died and rose again, God will bring with him those who have died with faith in Jesus. Paul provides hope in revealing Jesus will return and call the dead in Christ first then we who are alive will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Thess. 4:13-17
- ^{xx} The Angel Gabriel tells Daniel the fate of Israel. Following the rapture of the believers, Israel will be disciplined and unbelieving citizens of the world will endure a final judgment. Dan. 9:27.
- ^{xxi} Zech. 14:2, In Revelation 14, John describes the great battle on the Day of the Lord during the sixth of seven judgments. Rev. 16:14-16.
- ^{xxii} John describes the second coming of Jesus and the defeat of the antichrist and false prophet. Rev. 19:11-21
- ^{xxiii} John describes an angel bounding Satan for 1,000 years while Christ reigns on earth. Rev. 20:1-4.
- ^{xxiv} Satan’s last stand and ultimate defeat is recorded by the Apostle John. Rev. 20:7-10.
- ^{xxv} Those whose names were not recorded in the book of life were judged for their deeds and thrown into a lake of fire. Rev. 20:11-15.
- ^{xxvi} John sees the creation of a new heaven and earth and the tabernacle established on earth where God will dwell. Rev. 21:1-5
- ^{xxvii} No one knows the day or hour of His return. Not even the angels, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Matt. 24:36.
- ^{xxviii} In the Day of the Lord, the earth will be destroyed by fire so live godly lives. 2 Pet. 3:10-12; Paul instructs the Galatians to do good to all especially to those who are in the faith. Gal. 6:10.