

The Consummation

Apprentice Track Workshop

Session 11

Manuscript

Disclaimer* - In this final session we'll be discussing a lot of events that haven't happened yet. As a result there are a lot of differing opinions about how exactly things will unfold. We're not going to get into all the details, but just know we're presenting a particular view of the final stage in God's redemptive work call Historic or Classical Premillennialism. You can find a brief description of each of the four main views at the end of your handout.

Often Christians refer to this topic as eschatology (the study of the eschaton, last things) or "end times." And these phrases conjure up images of distant future events difficult to image. But in reality, the Bible consistently describes the last days as the time we're in right now (Jude 1:18, 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:18; 1 Corinthians 10:11; cf Acts 2:17; Romans 13:11-14).

So if we're in the last days right now, the final chapter of God's big story, let's look at what the Bible teaches about living in the last days.

A) Life as the Church in *These Last Days*

1) Be Prepared

- a) In Matthew 24, Jesus makes it clear why it is not for us to know when he will return. He says, **"keep watch because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him"** (v. 42-44).
- b) Jesus then illustrates this teaching again with the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25. He is driving home this message to **"keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour"** of his return.

2) Be Aware

- a) Signs evidencing the grace of God - Proclamation of the gospel to all nations (Matthew 24:14; 28:20)
 - (i) This does not mean all will be saved, but that the gospel will go to the ends of the earth.

- (ii) That is why John's vision in Revelation 7 sees a "multitude that no one can count."
- (iii) This should make us incredibly optimistic as followers of Jesus- the vine and mustard seed of the gospel will spread, Jesus' reign in the hearts of all mankind will take root!
- (iv) But at the same time, we must remember that the advance of the gospel is not the only thread of our story- darkness will also continue to advance.

b) Signs evidencing opposition to God

- (i) Tribulation (Matthew 24:21-24; Revelation 7:14) – This is a period of increased suffering and terrible events. God's demonic opponents will use every trick and power they have to hinder his plans for his kingdom.
- (ii) Apostasy – 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-7
- (iii) Antichrist – In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10 he is called the man of lawlessness, and in other passages such as Matthew 24:24 and 1 John 1:8 we are told there will be many antichrists. He also appears to be described as a false prophet in Revelation 16:13; 19:10; 20:20.

c) Signs evidencing the judgment of God (Matthew 24; Mark 13:3-13)

- (i) Wars
- (ii) Earthquakes
- (iii) Famines

- d) These are the twin and seemingly contradictory realities we find ourselves in- on the one hand Christ's victory is sure and his gospel is breaking forth- yet at the same time the Bible paints a picture of an increasingly darkening world that gets worse and worse.**

3) Be Hopeful

- a) The New Testament speaks of Christ's return as our 'blessed hope' (Titus 2:13). This is what we long for- the coming of Christ- his perfect presence and reign. This is the consummation of our salvation. Not the church, not justification, not even heaven- but the return of our king.**
- b) We are to therefore, prepare without being afraid. We are to observe without being obsessed about the dates and events. We are to wait without wearying.**

B) The Return of Christ

1) The Manner

a) Christ's return will be physical, bodily, and visible

- (i) When Jesus ascended into heaven in Acts 1, without delay two angels came and said to the disciples, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back *in the same way* you have seen him go into heaven" (v. 11).

b) Christ's return will be triumphant, glorious, and obvious.

- (i) And it will be a glorious return. Matthew 16:27 tells us that Jesus will return "**in his Father's glory.**"
- (ii) It appears this glory will be visible to all. In Revelation 1:7, John writes, "**Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him....**" Likewise, in the 1 Thessalonians passage we read earlier, Paul says that, "**the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God...**" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Christ's return will not be done secretly or stealthily. No, it will be loud and clear and announced and everyone will know that the Son of God has come.

C) The Millennial Reign of Christ

1) The Nature of Christ's Reign

- a) What will Christ's reign be like? After a period of tribulation Jesus will arrive. He'll gather the believers that are still alive, bind Satan from influencing this world, and begin his physical, earthly millennial reign. During the Millennial, Christ will reign physically on earth. Some premillennial interpreters believe the millennium will be exactly one thousand years long, but most allow that "one thousand" might figuratively indicate a long time of unspecified length.
- b) Christians, who have died before the return of Christ will be raised from the dead to reign with Christ and enjoy his presence. This is what we read in **Revelation 20:4** – Those who were faithful to Christ will be raised to life and reign with him for 1,000 years.
- c) But that's not all, Christians living at the time of Christ's return will be gathered to him to reign with him and enjoy his realm.
 - (i) This is related to the popular notion of the rapture. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Paul described the rapture this way: "**The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the**

trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

- (ii) The word “rapture” comes from the Latin version of these verses, which uses the verb “rapio,” where the English has “caught up.” So, the “rapture” is the event in which believers are caught up or gathered to Christ in the clouds. Historic premillennialism teaches that those believers that remain alive when Jesus returns will be gathered to him in the air. Then they’ll immediately return to earth with him as part of his victorious military parade, and live on earth during his millennial reign. This “rapture” will also include resurrected believers- those who had died in Christ will be raised at his coming.
- (iii) And this was a common image in the minds of Paul’s 1st century audience. When a conquering Roman Emperor would come into a city, the population of the city would rush out to welcome him and enter in the city as a procession with him.
- (iv) And the whole point of this imagery is to highlight Christ’s coming to dwell with his people as a king.

2) The Purpose of Christ’s Reign

- a)** Through the Millennial reign of Christ, God will fulfill his promises to Israel.
 - (i) Throughout the Old Testament God made promises to his covenant people of a physical tangible return to the promised land. He promised that a Son of David would reign on the throne.
 - (ii) In Romans 11:25-32 Paul writes that God will be faithful to his covenant to the Jews and many will be granted salvation when he returns. Let’s read those verses now... So when the Deliver comes the Jews will receive mercy. Now this simply means that they will trust in Jesus as their Messiah. And this will be accomplished during the Millennium.
- b)** The second purpose of the Millennium worth noting is, through the Millennial reign of Christ he will conquer every enemy culminating in the final judgment and completely reversing the curses of the Fall. This is what we read in 1 Corinthians 15. When Paul tells us, “He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be eliminated is death.” So the millennium is a crucial step in the unfolding of God’s purposes.

D) The Final Judgement and Eternal Punishment - Following the Millennium and the final vanquish of Christ’s enemies comes the final judgement. This is the judgment in which all people are either condemned or rewarded for eternity. Let’s go once more to Revelation 20,

starting in verse 11. ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and one seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. ¹² I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. ¹³ Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works. ¹⁴ Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. Here are a few things to draw out from this passage.

1) Unbelievers will be judged and condemned to eternal punishment

2) Believers will be judged according to our works and rewarded – There are many passages that teach that we will be judged according to our works (John 5:28; Romans 2:6-8 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:6,21; Ephesians 5:5; James 2:14-26; Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 10:25-28). And this in no way contradicts the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. Our works are not the basis for our salvation but they are the demonstration of it. Our welcome into the kingdom will not be *earned by works* but it will be *according to works*. There will be an “accord” or an agreement between our salvation and our works. How these rewards will actually get worked out is not made clear.

E) The New Heavens and New Earth - Revelation 21 says, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.’”

1) Life in the World to Come - So this is the end, the climax, and grand crescendo toward which all of God’s purposes for the world he created are heading.

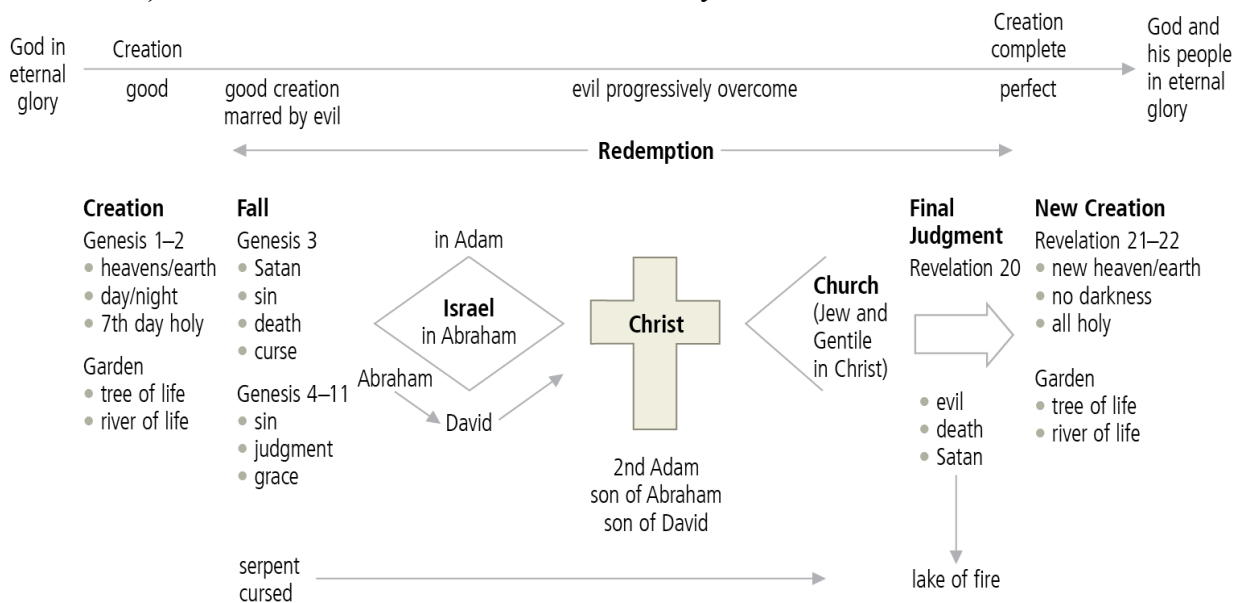
a) Glorified Physical Bodies – Philippians 3:16 and other passages make it clear that in eternity we will have physical, tangible, flesh and blood bodies with sense and nerves and bones and flesh. But they will be glorified – that is every imperfection will be removed. How this exactly will look is a mystery. But the main point is that we will have a physical existence. Earth will be earth- just better. We will live in a city on Earth- the new earth. We will not just be trapped in an eternal worship service we will be living real full, physical, lives- working, laughing, loving, playing and resting. It will be life in the Garden like Adam and Eve could have had- only even better!

b) Life as we always dreamt it could be

- (i) But more than just a physical life- this eternal state will satisfy every longing, it will be life as we could perfectly want it to be- if we could in fact want something perfectly. Later in Revelation 22 we're told that no sorrow will be present- can you imagine that? Never feeling another feeling of pain, loss, nagging guilt, simmering regret or dissatisfaction? But not only will there be an absence of sorrow- there will also be an absence of sin. "Nothing unclean, detestable or false will ever enter." We will finally be saved from both the presence and consequences of sin.

2) The New Heavens and Earth Demonstrate a Complete Reversal of the Curse

- a) In Genesis 3:17-19, God cursed the earth because of Adam's sin. But in verse 15 of that same chapter, God indicated that when the Redeemer came, he would reverse the effects of the curse.
- b) In Revelation 21:1, John reported: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (Revelation 21:1). John's description of a new heaven and new earth continues through 22:5. In the new heavens and new earth, God's curse on the earth will be completely removed. The ground will no longer cause us trouble, and we'll enjoy and tend God's perfected kingdom with ease. And more importantly, God will be present with us in a visible way.
- c) You can see these themes in the chart in your hand out.



- 3) **From a Garden to a City** - All the events from Genesis 3 to Revelation 20 have been in preparation for a grand restoration greater than anything we have ever experienced. God is preparing a people for Himself who will live together with Him for all eternity. The hope of the New Testament is not that we will die and go to heaven. The hope of the New

Testament is that our bodies will be resurrected and we live an eternal yet physical new life on a new earth with God and his people. John uses three Old Testament images to depict this eternal state.

- (i) A New City – A huge chunk of Revelation 21 is spent describing the details and dimensions of this city- the wall, the streets, the buildings, the length and height. What's the point?
 - First, Jesus wants us to know that his city will be massive, room for all his people.
 - Second, a city is a place of rest for the wandering, sojourning people of God. Abraham the migrating herdsman longed for a city for his descendants to call home. David gave them a taste of that rest behind the walls of Jerusalem. But in the New Covenant we long for the New Jerusalem to give us rest from our sojourning.
- (ii) A New Holy of Holies – Curiously, there is no temple in this city. Instead the city itself embodies the holy of holies, where God's presence dwelled in the temple. We're told this new city will be a perfect cube, just as the holy of holies. We're also told Gd will again dwell with his people. There will be no need for a sun because God will be fully present. We will be with God in his perfect presence.
- (iii) A New Edenic Garden – John's description of the new Jerusalem echo so much of Genesis 1-2. This is very similar to the parallels we saw between Eden and the Temple- but there is even more development.
 - It will be a lush garden, better than Eden.
 - A river will flow through the garden just as in Genesis
 - The tree of life will be there bearing fruit.
 - God's purposes will culminate right where they began- only better. For this new garden will not be vulnerable like the first. "Nothing unclean will ever enter it" (21:27) No serpent, no sin, no sorrow no death. Just God and his people forever.

F) Conclusion

- 1) In the end Christ will Triumph as our King!
- 2) We will enjoy unhindered access to presence of God!
- 3) And all of God's promises will prove true!

***4 Views on the Last Things**

1) Postmillennialism

- a) This view says that through the binding of Satan, there will be a gradual increase in the growth of the church and spread of the gospel where more and more people will become Christians. The influence of more believers will change society so that it will function as God intended gradually resulting into an age of peace and righteousness, in other words – the millennium, which is not necessarily a literal one thousand years.
- b) Christ will then come back “post”, or after, the millennium.

2) Amillennialism

- a) This view is the simplest and says that Satan’s binding will reduce his influence over the nations so that the gospel is preached to the whole world, yet there is a general view that times will worsen.
- b) Christ’s reign is a heavenly one and the millennium is equivalent to the church age currently going on, without reference to a literal thousand years. Christ will then return and judge believers and unbelievers at once.

3) Premillennialism

a) Dispensationalism

- (i) This is a rather recent view which states that Christ will rapture believers before the suffering of the tribulation period. During the tribulation, the Jewish people will be left to go through it and will be ultimately converted. He will then return for a third time after the tribulation with his saints to rule the earth for one thousand years.

b) Historic or Classic Premillennialism

- (i) The church age will go through the tribulation period. At the end of the tribulation, Satan will be bound, and Christ will come back to establish his kingdom on earth for the millennium, which is not necessarily a literal thousand years. The resurrected believers will reign with the resurrected Christ physically on earth during this time.
- (ii) At the end of the millennium, Satan is loosed and Christ decisively defeats him and his remaining followers. Then the unbelievers from all times will be judged, and the believers will enter into the eternal state.
- (iii) At PGC we do not hold that these views are central to the gospel. Faithful believers can hold to any of these four (though it is rare to find a Post-Millennialist who holds to the inerrancy of Scripture). However, each of the elders and our statement of faith affirms Premillennialism.
- (iv) More narrowly, Classical Premillennialism does the best job at understanding the return of Christ based on the plain reading of important texts (rather than spiritualizing

everything or reading it super figuratively) while at the same time recognizing that the prophetic and apocalyptic books are mysterious and intentionally figurative. So, in this class we'll be looking at the details of the end times from the perspective of Historic Premillennialism.