

The End-Times and the Coming Age

A Position Paper of Legacy Church

Introduction

Eschatology is the study of the end of the age as revealed in the Scriptures. It is a subject that has generated much discussion, disagreement, and at times division within the Church. Yet it is not a secondary curiosity. It is a vital part of the biblical story, revealing where history is headed and how God will ultimately fulfill His promises.

Our desire in studying eschatology is not merely to understand timelines or events, but to know Jesus more deeply. If we walk away with greater knowledge of the end of the age but have not grown in love for Christ, we have missed the point entirely. This is about knowing Him.

We approach this subject with both conviction and humility. We are persuaded by what we believe the Scriptures teach, yet we also recognize that we "know in part." God has revealed much, but not everything. We are not loyal to a theological position but to Jesus. For this reason, we refuse to divide from faithful believers over secondary disagreements related to the end of the age.

At the same time, we believe the Scriptures give us enough clarity to form a coherent and faithful understanding of what is to come. What follows is our attempt to present that understanding in a way that is biblical, historically grounded, and pastorally helpful.

Old Testament Scriptures, Concepts, and the Jewish Understanding

The foundation of eschatology is rooted in the Old Testament. The prophets consistently spoke of a coming "Day of the Lord," a decisive moment in history when God would judge evil, deliver His people, and establish His reign.

Isaiah speaks of the nations being judged and the Lord reigning from Zion. Daniel describes the Son of Man receiving dominion and an everlasting kingdom. Zechariah foretells a day when the Lord will stand on the Mount of Olives and fight on behalf of Jerusalem.

These passages present a future that is not merely spiritual or symbolic, but deeply rooted in history, geography, and real events. The expectation was that God would intervene in the world in a visible and decisive way.

The Jewish understanding that developed from these texts was clear. They expected a Messiah who would defeat evil, restore Israel, and establish a kingdom on the earth. While they misunderstood aspects of His first coming, their expectation of a real and tangible kingdom was grounded in the text itself.

This expectation forms the foundation for how the New Testament speaks about the end of the age.

New Testament Scriptures

The New Testament affirms and expands the Old Testament expectation. Jesus and the apostles consistently teach that history is moving toward a climactic moment, the visible return of Christ.

In Matthew 24-25, Jesus describes a future period of tribulation, deception, and global unrest, followed by His return in power and glory. This return is unmistakable and visible.

Paul reinforces this in 1 Thessalonians 4-5, describing the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the gathering of believers. In 2 Thessalonians 2, he describes a future rebellion and the revealing of the man of lawlessness, who will be destroyed by the appearing of Jesus.

The book of Revelation provides the clearest sequence. In Revelation 19, Christ returns as a conquering King. In Revelation 20, Satan is bound and Christ reigns for a thousand years.

Across these passages, several themes are consistent. The church will face tribulation. Evil will intensify. Christ will return visibly. And God will establish His kingdom.

Early Church (First 300 Years)

The earliest Christians largely held to what is commonly called chiliasm, the belief in a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth following His return.

Justin Martyr

"I and others who are right-minded Christians on all points are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem... which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged."

Dialogue with Trypho, ch. 80

Irenaeus

A disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of the apostle John, writes:

"When this Antichrist shall have devastated all things... then the Lord will come from heaven... bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom."

Against Heresies V.30.4

"The righteous shall reign in the earth... after the coming of Antichrist."

Against Heresies V.32.1

These statements reflect a clear sequence: tribulation, the rise of Antichrist, the return of Christ, and then the establishment of His kingdom on the earth.

This early consensus is significant. These were leaders closely connected to the apostolic age, and their understanding reflects a natural reading of the Scriptures.

A shift begins with Origen, who introduced a more allegorical method of interpretation. In *On First Principles*, he writes:

"Who is so foolish as to suppose that God... planted a paradise in Eden, like a farmer?"

On First Principles IV.16

Origen's approach sought to uncover deeper spiritual meanings within the text. While this method addressed certain interpretive challenges, it also introduced a danger. When prophetic passages are consistently allegorized, their original, historical meaning can be reshaped.

This shift in interpretation laid the groundwork for later developments in eschatology.

Augustine and the Rise of Amillennialism

The most influential figure in shaping Western eschatology was Augustine of Hippo.

In *The City of God*, Augustine reinterprets the millennium described in Revelation 20:

"The thousand years... may be understood... as the whole period of this world... or as the duration of the Church."

City of God, Book XX, Chapter 7

He also connects the binding of Satan to Christ's first coming:

"The devil is bound... that he might not seduce the nations."

City of God, XX.8

In Augustine's framework, the millennium is not a future earthly reign, but a present spiritual reality. Christ reigns now through His Church.

This development did not occur in isolation. By this time, the Church had moved from a persecuted minority to a dominant cultural force within the Roman Empire. Additionally, Israel had long ceased to exist as a nation. In this context, a literal earthly kingdom centered in Jerusalem became less intuitive, and a spiritualized interpretation gained traction.

Augustine's framework would shape Western Christianity for centuries and heavily influence the Reformers.

The Reformers and Eschatology

The Reformers largely inherited the eschatological framework developed by Augustine of Hippo and did not seek to significantly revise it. While their primary focus was on recovering the authority of Scripture and the doctrine of justification by faith, they consistently affirmed the central elements of the Christian hope.

Martin Luther

"He will come again at the Last Day to judge both the living and the dead... and will give to believers and the elect eternal life and everlasting joy."

Large Catechism, Apostles' Creed

John Calvin

"Christ will come... to judge the world... and to complete the redemption of His people."

Institutes, 3.25.10

At the same time, Calvin explicitly rejects a literal earthly millennium:

"The fiction... that Christ will reign for a thousand years on earth is too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation."

Institutes, 3.25.5

The Augsburg Confession affirms:

"At the consummation of the world Christ will appear for judgment... He will raise up all the dead... the godly shall receive everlasting life."

Article XVII

The Westminster Confession of Faith similarly states:

"God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ."

33.4

Across these writings, there is strong agreement on the return of Christ, the resurrection, and final judgment, while the millennium is understood in a non-literal or present sense.

Mainstream Western Christianity

Today, several primary views exist within Western Christianity.

Dispensational premillennialism teaches a pre-tribulation rapture and a distinction between Israel and the Church.

Amillennialism interprets the millennium as a present spiritual reality.

Postmillennialism teaches that the gospel will progressively transform the world before Christ returns.

Historic premillennialism teaches that Christ will return after a period of tribulation and establish a real, earthly reign.

It is worth noting that amillennial and postmillennial views gained prominence during periods when Israel did not exist as a nation. In that context, Old Testament promises were often interpreted symbolically or applied to the Church.

The reemergence of Israel has led some to revisit these interpretations and reconsider whether a more literal reading is warranted.

Key Scriptures for Interpretation and Application

Matthew 24-25

1 Thessalonians 4-5

2 Thessalonians 2

Daniel 7-12

Revelation 19-20

A Biblical Framework of the End of the Age

- The present age is marked by the spread of the gospel and increasing opposition.
- A period of tribulation will arise, culminating in the appearance of the Antichrist.
- The great tribulation will bring unprecedented distress.
- At its climax, Jesus will return visibly and powerfully, defeat His enemies, and establish His reign. This includes the final battle often referred to as Armageddon.
- Following this, Satan will be bound, and Christ will reign for a thousand years.
- After this period, final judgment takes place, and the age to come begins.

Eschatology at Legacy Church (Practical Outworking)

At Legacy Church, we affirm historic premillennialism. We believe Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly to fulfill the promises of Scripture and establish the fullness of His Kingdom (Matthew 24:30-31). History is not spiraling aimlessly. It is moving toward a single, glorious conclusion under the lordship of Christ.

We believe the Church will endure a time of great tribulation prior to Christ's return (Matthew 24:21-31, John 16:33). Like with all forms of trials, in that day God's people are called to persevere in faith, and overcome the evil one by the blood of the Lamb, in that our testimony and not loving our lives even unto death (Revelation 12:11). Our call is to hold fast to the hope that Jesus will one day raise the dead, defeat all evil, and restore His creation.

We hold this view and believe it to be the most faithful to the earliest teachings of the church. The witness of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, men closely connected to the apostolic age, reflects a natural reading of the prophets, the Gospels, and the book of Revelation. The sequence they describe, tribulation, the rise of Antichrist, the visible return of Christ, and the establishment of His earthly reign, is the sequence we find most consistent with the whole witness of Scripture.

How We Hold This

We hold this with conviction, but also with humility. Faithful believers have disagreed on aspects of the end of the age throughout church history, and we refuse to divide over secondary matters. We recognize that there is much debate on this topic and we leave room for that. Regardless of position, our hope is united with all believers: Jesus wins, His Kingdom comes, and God will dwell with His people forever.

What This Calls Us To

Our focus is not speculation, but faithfulness. The return of Christ calls us to:

- Readiness, living each day as those who expect their King
- Holiness, knowing that we will stand before Him
- Endurance, bearing tribulation with faith rather than fear
- Perseverance, holding fast to the word of our testimony
- Mission, proclaiming the gospel urgently to a world moving toward judgment

Ultimately, eschatology is not about charts and timelines. It is about the return of a King.

And our hope is not in escaping the world, but in the One who will come to redeem it.

Jesus wins. His Kingdom comes.
God will dwell with His people forever.