

## Basic Bible Doctrine

### Lesson 10: Eschatology

#### I. Introduction

In *Revelation 1:3* the apostle John writes:

*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

- A. What does John promise to those who hear and heed this book of prophecy?
- B. How will a knowledge of prophecy bless the reader?
- C. Why are so many Christians hesitant to take on the study of end times?

Many Christians view prophecy with confusion and cynicism. In exasperation, they will give up the study to men with special intellect who can discern the meaning of ten-horned beasts and decode the meaning of the seventy weeks of Daniel. Yet, God promises a blessing for all those who resolve to think about the future. In light of this, we will provide a brief sketch of the end times to give you a foundation to build your own understanding of the future.

#### II. The Tribulation:

The Tribulation is the seventieth week of Daniel (*Dan. 9:27*), a week according to the prophet's terminology equaling seven years. It is the last of a seventy-week (490 years) prophecy regarding Israel's future (*Dan. 9:24–27*), which began in 444 B.C. Sixty-nine weeks (483 years) concluded with the death of Christ (*Dan. 9:26*). There is a gap between the sixty-ninth week (A.D. 33) and the seventieth week (the future Tribulation period).<sup>1</sup> As the seventieth week of Daniel, the Tribulation has particular reference to Israel (not the church), because Daniel was told, "*Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people*" (*Dan. 9:24*). When Jesus detailed the events of the Tribulation in *Matthew 24–25*, He explained to the disciples what would happen to the *nation Israel*, indicating the Tribulation has reference to Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> See Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), pp. 115–39 where Hoehner discusses the seventieth week and establishes the necessity of a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. See also Alva J. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1940).

The Tribulation will involve the judgment of God upon an unbelieving world, as detailed in *Revelation 6–19*. The consecutive series of seals, trumpets, and bowl judgments of Revelation detail God’s judgment upon unbelievers, climaxing in the triumphant return of Christ to earth with His bride, the church (*Rev. 19:11–21*).

From the Scriptures we know that the Tribulation is a time of outpouring of the wrath of God (*1 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:19; 15:1; 16:1, 19*); it is a time of punishment (*Isa. 24:20–21*); a time of trouble (*Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1*); a time of great destruction (*Joel 1:15; 1 Thess. 5:3*); a time of desolation (*Zeph. 1:14, 15*); a time of judgment (*Rev. 14:7; 16:5; 19:2*).

The first purpose of the Tribulation is to bring about the conversion of Israel, which will be accomplished through God’s disciplinary dealing with His people Israel (*Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 20:37; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8–9*). The second purpose of the Tribulation is to judge unbelieving people and nations (*Isa. 26:21; Jer. 25:32–33; 2 Thess. 2:12*).<sup>2</sup>

- How obvious will it be to the living saints that they are indeed in the presence of the tribulation? Why?

### III. The Rapture:

The title “rapture” comes from the Latin word used in *1 Thessalonians 4:17* which is translated in English “caught up.” It is the catching up to the dwelling place promised in *John 14:1–3*. In *1 Corinthians 15: 51* Paul says this is a mystery. That word “mystery” ought to be like a red flag reminding us that this is something not known before but now revealed. The resurrection was no mystery, for the Old Testament taught clearly that men would be raised from the dead (*Job 19:25; Is 26:19; Dan 12:2*), but it did not reveal that a number of people would go into God’s presence without experiencing death. That is why “*we shall not all sleep*” is a mystery (*1 Co 15:51*). At the rapture some mortals (living) will only need to put on immortality, while those whose bodies have seen corruption (dead) will need to put on incorruption through resurrection. Both routes to heaven involve change—the living need to be translated and the dead raised. The last generation of Christians will not experience death.<sup>3</sup>

Those familiar with theology know that there is some disagreement about the timing of the rapture. Some believe that it will happen during the seven year tribulation, others in the middle, but the preferred position before the tribulation – hence the pretribulation rapture.

Arguments for this position include the following:

<sup>2</sup>Enns, Paul P.: *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago, Ill. : Moody Press, 1997, c1989, S. 391

<sup>3</sup>Ryrie, Charles Caldwell: *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*. Chicago : Moody Press, 1995, c1972

1. In the following passages God promises the church (the community of Christians beginning at Pentecost) that they will not participate in the wrath to come. This wrath is best understood as the seven year tribulation.<sup>4</sup>

*1 Thessalonians 1:10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

2. *Revelation 3:10* explains how it is that the church will avoid God’s wrath.

*Revelation 3:10 ‘Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

Jesus promises the church of Philadelphia that He will keep them from the hour of testing. This preposition “from” implies an external protection. For instance, when Jesus asks in *John 17:15*

*“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.*

Jesus prays that the disciples will be kept outside the reach of Satan. In the case of *Revelation 3:10*, the church is kept out of the reach of the tribulation via the pre-tribulational rapture. If, as some critics imply, this speaks of preserving the church during the judgments of the tribulation, a better term would be “keep you in the midst of the hour of testing.” Jesus promises external not internal preservation.

3. The doctrine of immanency<sup>5</sup> teaches us that we should expect the Lord’s return at any given point in time. Yet, the tribulation is clearly presented as a seven year period characterized by obvious worldwide judgment initiated after the signing of a seven year peace treaty (*Dan. 9:27*). If one argues – as some do – that the rapture occurs after the tribulation, then it would be difficult to maintain an imminent view of Christ’s return. Believers would know that they should expect the Lord’s return exactly seven years after the onset of the tribulation. Therefore, a “post-tribulational” understanding does not mesh with the teaching of such passages as *James 5:7-9*:

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<sup>4</sup> While some believers will be alive during the tribulation, it should be noted that this is a promise made to the church (not to all believers for all time).

<sup>5</sup> By imminent we mean that other things may happen before the imminent event, but nothing must happen before it. In other words, the rapture is the next event on the eschatological calendar.

*<sup>7</sup> Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. <sup>8</sup> You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. <sup>9</sup> Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.*

4. What does it look like for us to live like the Lord could rapture us at any moment?
  
5. How would you respond to someone who scoffs at the notion of Christ rapture, saying, “He hasn’t come back for two thousand years, what makes you think that He will do it now?” (2 Pet. 3:4,8)

#### **IV. The Millennium:**

Despite relative agreement about a future reign of Christ, the topic of the millennium has been one of the most hotly contested doctrines in the modern church. So notorious is this dispute that many refuse the labels of postmillennialist, amillennialist, and premillennialist in favor of the all-encompassing “panmillennialist”, since “it will all work out in the end.” While this approach liberates one from eschatological debates, it also dulls the understanding of a truly significant doctrine. A proper or improper understanding of the millennium has a ripple effect on one’s view of the world, the mission of the church, and our present engagement with the forces of evil in this world.

*Revelation 20:4-10 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. <sup>7</sup> When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, <sup>8</sup> and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. <sup>9</sup> And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. <sup>10</sup> And the devil who deceived them was*

*thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

A. Amillennialism

1. Summary:

According to this view, we currently live in the spiritual millennium which began with Christ’s triumph through the resurrection. Consequently, amillennialists interpret the first resurrection (**Rev. 20:4**) as a *spiritual* one, in which all who place their faith in Christ become regenerated from their spiritual deadness. Further, His victory binds Satan (**Rev. 20:2-3**) and allows the Kingdom of God to spread across the world via the faithful preaching of the Gospel. At the end of the church age, Satan will be released and Christ will come back to crush his rebellion. At this time the second, *physical* resurrection of the dead (**Rev. 20:12-13**) will take place, and final judgments will transpire. The unbelieving will suffer eternal condemnation while believers will be rewarded according to their service.

2. Merits:

- a. Simplifies end time events into one climactic conclusion.
- b. Allows for the imminent return of Christ.

3. Weaknesses:

- a. Seems to stray from a consistently literal hermeneutic of Scripture (i.e. the first resurrection being spiritual while the second is literal; the redefinition of 1,000 years; no literal seven-year tribulation).
- b. Other Scriptures seem to describe Satan as active and unbound (**1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Co. 4:3-4; 1 Pet. 5:8**)

B. Postmillennialism

1. Summary:

According to this view, Christ will make His physical return after the millennium. Adherents believe that we are currently living in the physical millennium which either began with Christ's triumph through the resurrection or the end of the tribulation via the destruction of Jerusalem (i.e. preterists).<sup>6</sup> As in Amillennialism, the first resurrection is seen as spiritual (**Rev. 20:4**) and Satan is currently bound (**Rev. 20:2-3**). However a Postmillennialist does not see this as the church age, but as a golden age that improves with the spread of the gospel and the emergence of Christians and their worldview. In the words of one theologian, "Postmillennialism is that view of the last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the millennium."<sup>7</sup>

Recently, a new variety of postmillennialist has emerged on the scene by the name of "Reconstructionists" or "Theonomists," who actively seek to reinstitute the Mosaic Law Code worldwide with the belief that this will initiate Christ's return.

## 2. Merits:

- a. Has an extremely optimistic perspective on the church and its mission to the world.
- b. Simplifies all end times into one climactic event.
- c. Holds the church responsible for societal changes in the world.

## 3. Weaknesses:

- a. General observation would lead one to believe that the world is not improving.
- b. Seems to stray from a consistently literal hermeneutic of Scripture (i.e. the first resurrection being spiritual while the second literal; the redefinition of 1,000 years; no literal seven-year tribulation).

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<sup>6</sup> "Preterism is the view that descriptions in Revelation pertain not to yet-future times but to events that have occurred in the past." Dallas Theological Seminary. *Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 157*, Vol. 157, Page 454, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2000; 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Loraine Boettner, "Postmillennialism," in *The Meaning of Millenium: Four Views*, ed. R. Clouse (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1977), 117.

- c. Other Scriptures seem to describe Satan as active and unbound (*1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Co. 4:3-4; 1 Pet. 5:8*)

### C. Historic Premillennialism

#### 1. Summary:

According to this perspective the present age will continue until the time of the great tribulation. At the end of the tribulation, which is the conclusion of the church age, Christ will return and raise all believers from the dead and they will reign with Christ for the 1,000 years. After that period of time, Satan will emerge from his millennium-long prison and join forces with unbelievers who had only externally allied themselves with Christ. Jesus will crush their rebellion, the rest of the dead will be raised for judgment, and finally He will establish a new heaven and earth.

#### 2. Merits:

- a. Preserves the literal millennium.
- b. Was the prevailing view of the early church.

#### 3. Weaknesses:

- a. Proponents struggle to harmonize the immanency of Christ's return with the seven-year tribulation. Often, this leads them to tone down the severity of the tribulation to a level that could be occurring presently.
- b. Blurs the line between the church and Israel. Interpreters extend the church age through the tribulation, thus toning down the Jewish element of that period of time.

### D. Dispensational Premillennialism

#### 1. Summary:

According to this perspective the present age will continue until Christ returns suddenly and unexpectedly to rapture His church. Shortly after that event, the

Great Tribulation will ensue, in which God arrests the earth’s attention with a series of severe judgments. The purpose of this seven-year period is to bring about the repentance of Israel so that they might be able to fulfill their calling in the coming age. At the end of the tribulation, Christ Himself will return to rescue His people, dispose of their enemies, cast the Antichrist and the False Prophet into the Lake of Fire and bind Satan and throw him into prison. Then Christ will raise all believers from the dead and they will reign with Him for 1,000 years. After that period of time, Satan will emerge from his millennium-long prison and join forces with unbelievers who had only externally allied themselves with Christ. Jesus will crush their rebellion, and then the rest of the dead will be raised and judged. Finally, He will establish a new heaven and earth and the eternal state will begin.

2. Merits:

- a. Preserves a literal understanding of the millennium and the Tribulation.
- b. Highlights the imminent return of Christ.
- c. A literal millennium provides a time frame for the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel.

3. Weaknesses:

- a. The pretribulational rapture is not explicitly taught in the Scriptures.
- b. The Millennium is only taught in one passage.

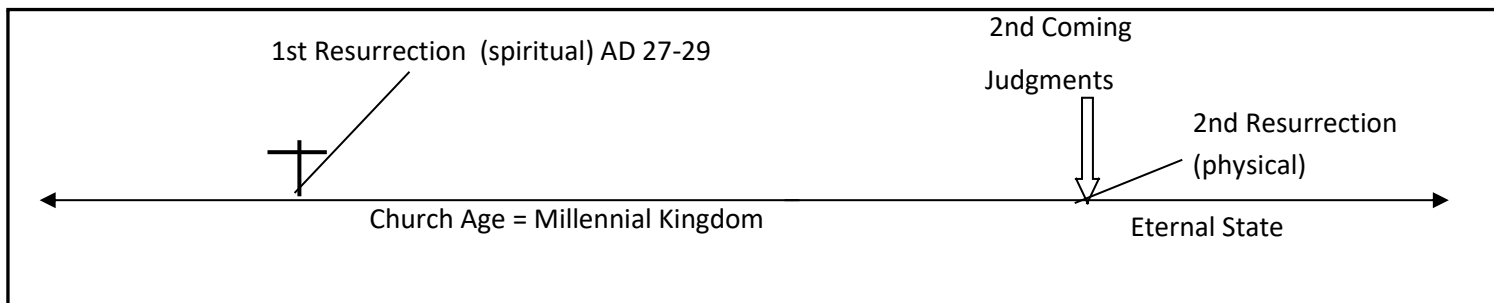
E. Conclusion:

Of these four options, we prefer Dispensational Premillennialism. For reasons stated above, there is a solid case for the pretribulational rapture. In addition, though the thousand-year millennium is only taught in *Revelation Chapter 20*, it is still taught. Also, Old Testament passages such as *Ezekiel 3:19-27* teach of a golden age of Israel which would coincide with the millennium. All in all, it is the commitment to a literal hermeneutic which leads us to adopt this view.

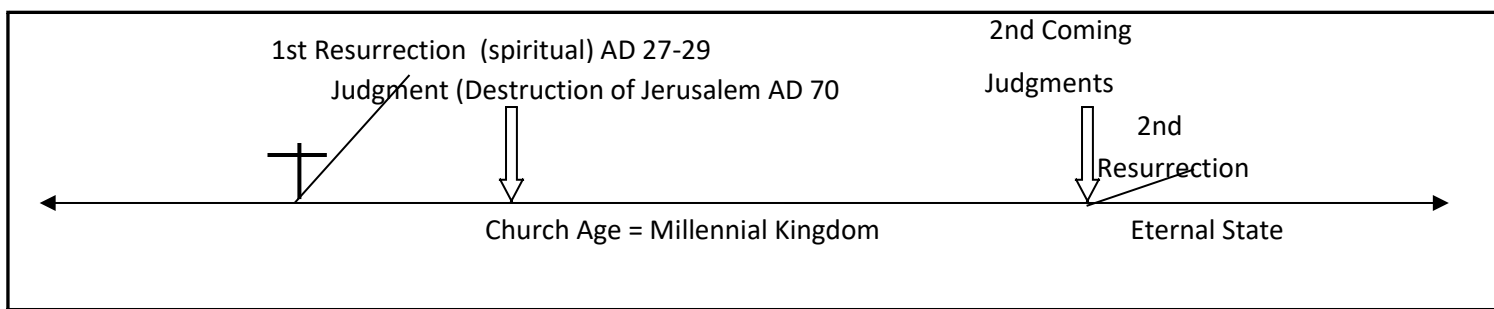
- In light of the above discussion, why are there such differing opinions about the millennium?



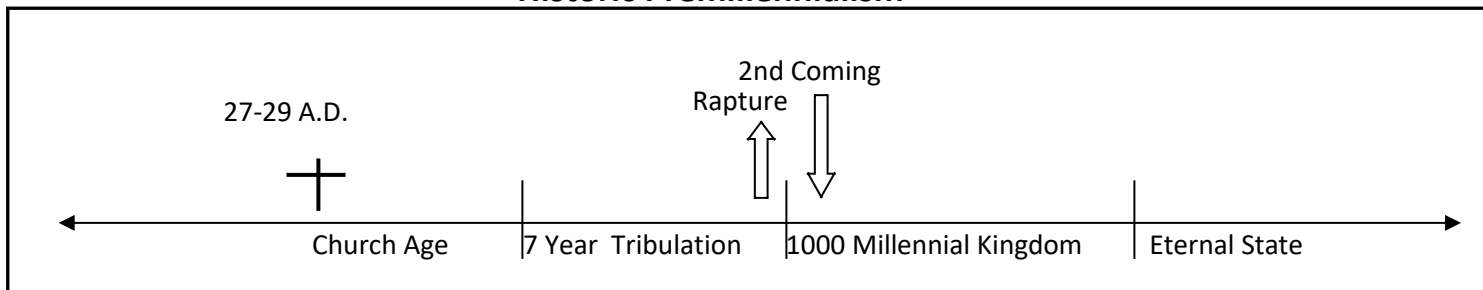
### Amillennialism



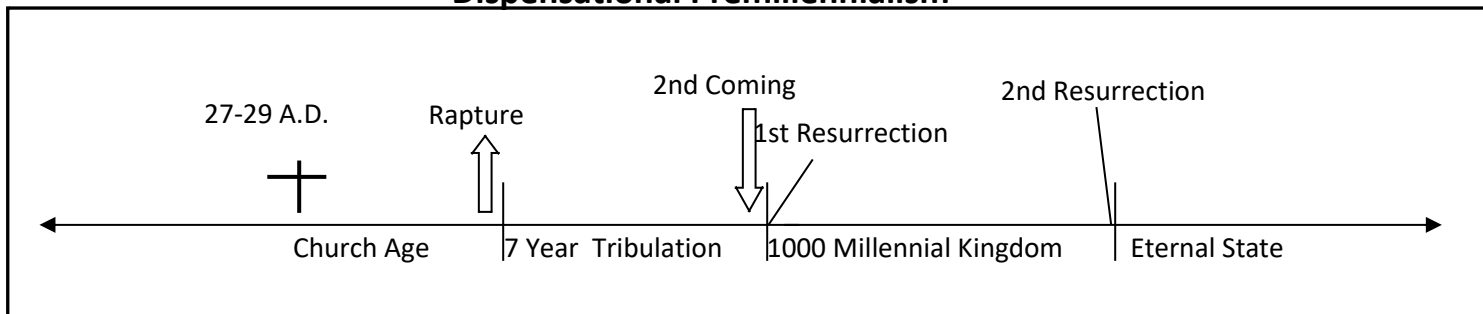
### Postmillennialism



### Historic Premillennialism



### Dispensational Premillennialism



## F. The Relationship between the Old Testament Covenants and the Millennium:

In the following section, we will attempt to answer the oft repeated question, “What is the purpose of the millennium?” In others words, why does God allow for a thousand year gap between the return of Christ, and the creation of the New Heavens and earth. The answer can be found in the faithfulness of God, to fulfill His covenants or promises to Israel.

These covenants were *literal, unconditional, and eternal*. In other words, God binds Himself by making promises irrespective of the behavior of the other party.<sup>8</sup> In the words of **Romans 11:29** “*The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*”

With no conditions attached to these covenants, God unequivocally promises Israel a future land, a Messianic rule, and spiritual blessings. When taking a literal view of these promises, it becomes very clear that they have not yet been fulfilled. Hence, the millennium will be the time when all of these promises come to complete fruition. As we examine the various covenants we will gather an understanding of what life will be like in the millennium.

(1) **The Abrahamic covenant**. Described in **Genesis 12:1–3**, the Abrahamic covenant promised a *land* (v.1; cf. **13:14–17**; further developed in the Palestinian covenant); numerous *descendants* involving a nation, dynasty, and a throne (v. 2; cf. **13:16; 17:2–6**; further developed in the Davidic covenant); and *redemption* (v. 3; cf. **22:18**; further developed in the New Covenant).

- Who are the descendents of Abraham and is there any basis for the claim that they include the church? (Hint: How did the birth of Isaac strengthen Abraham’s faith in the covenant? And how would the appropriation of the land inform our understanding of whether or not the covenant is for the church?)

(2) **The Palestinian covenant** (**Deut. 30:1–10**). This covenant guarantees Israel’s permanent right to the land. It is unconditional, for the statements of what “God will do” have no corresponding obligations. This covenant promises that Israel will ultimately return to the land in repentance and faith (v. 2) in circumstances wherein God will prosper them (v. 3). This covenant will be fulfilled in the Millennium.

(3) **The Davidic covenant** (**2 Sam. 7:12–16**). The provisions of this covenant are summarized in **verse 16** by the following words: “house,” promising a dynasty in the lineage of David; “kingdom,” referring to a people who are governed by a king;

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<sup>8</sup> Not all covenants are unilateral. For instance, the Mosaic or Old Covenant promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

“throne,” emphasizing the authority of the king’s rule; “forever,” emphasizing the eternal and unconditional nature of this promise to Israel. This covenant will be fulfilled when Christ returns to rule over believing Israel.

- How will this promise be fulfilled in the Millennium (*Matthew 1:1*)?

(4) **The New Covenant** (*Jer. 31:31–34*). This covenant provides the basis by which God will bless Israel in the future—Israel will enjoy forgiveness of sins through the meritorious death of Christ. The unconditional nature of this covenant is once more seen in the “I will” statements of *vv. 33–34*.

- How will Israel’s future obedience compare with their present obedience today or their past obedience in Old Testament days?

If these covenants are understood according to their normal meaning, then they call for a future blessing of believing, national Israel in the land under Messiah’s rule. These covenants await a fulfillment in the Millennium.<sup>9</sup>

## V. Hell:

A description of hell, such as the one provided by Jonathan Edward’s famous sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* touches a nerve in many Christians. Some take heed and resolve to warn the lost about their fate. Others struggle to harmonize the idea of endless punishment with the God of love they learned about in Sunday school. Consequently, theologians, pastors, and parishioners alike have been re-evaluating the traditional concept of an eternal Hell. This debate has not been restricted to mainline liberal churches, but has seeped into those of the evangelical persuasion. Hell has been placed on trial, as this doctrine has been assaulted from both outside and inside evangelicalism. Thus, the goal of this study will be to survey the four most popular views, and then arrive at a biblical resolution.

### A. Four Views of Hell:

#### 1. Universalism:

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<sup>9</sup>Enns, Paul P. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1997, c1989.

This is the belief that in the fullness of time all souls will be released from the penalties of sin and restored to God.<sup>10</sup> Simply put, everybody will be saved. Supporters of this position include J. A. T. Robinson and John Hick. Many will be surprised to find out that this is the most popular position among clergy in all of Christendom.

- What is the appeal of this view?

## 2. Post-Mortem Evangelism:

Robert Peterson in his excellent book Hell on Trial defines this position with the following: “The church has erred in teaching that death is a cutoff point for grace and that everlasting punishment is the destiny of the unrepentant. On the contrary, [one advocate] assures us, ‘If God really loves the whole world and desires everyone to be saved, it follows logically that everyone must have access to salvation.’ Those who do not have sufficient access in this life will have it in the next.”<sup>11</sup> Advocates of this position include Clark Pinnock.

## 3. Annihilationalism:

In the words of one of the advocates of the position:

*Let me say at the outset that I consider the concept of hell as endless torment in the body and mind an outrageous doctrine, a theological and moral enormity, a bad doctrine of the tradition which needs to be changed. How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any ordinary moral standards, and by the gospel itself. Surely the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is no fiend; torturing people without end is not what our God does.<sup>12</sup>*

As you can see, adherents to this point of view feel strongly about defending the character of God. They contend that the idea of everlasting punishment makes God a monster. Thus, they believe that when the Bible speaks of destruction, it means just that: destruction. When the second resurrection transpires, unbelievers are judged and put out of

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<sup>10</sup> D. B. Eller, “Universalism” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984) pg. 1128.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Peterson, *Hell on Trial* (Phillipsburg: NJ: R &R, 1995) p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, “The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent,” *Criswell Theological Review* 4.2 (1990): 246-7.

existence forever. This view is taught by John Stott, John Wenham, Clark Pinnock, Jehovah Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists.

- What is the appeal of this view?

#### 4. Eternal Conscious Torment (the traditional view):

Hell refers to the final abode of the damned, the Lake of Fire to which all the guilty will be sentenced after they have been resurrected for the Great White Throne Judgment. The Bible teaches that all who do not place their faith and trust in Christ during this lifetime will suffer God's wrath for eternity.

### B. The Biblical Teaching:

#### 1. Hell is Eternal:

- a. *Mark 9:47-48 "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED."*

From this verse it is pretty clear that the duration of Hell is forever.

- b. *Matthew 25:41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'"*

Notice that the fate of the devil and the angels awaits the wicked.

- c. *Matthew 25:46 "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

This is one of the strongest verses to support an everlasting Hell, contrasting eternal life with eternal punishment and demonstrating that these very different fates have the same duration.

2. **Hell is a place of torment:** The authors of Scripture use five major motifs to describe the everlasting abode of the damned.

- a. **Darkness and Separation:** This speaks of eternal rejection of unbelievers by their Maker and the total exclusion from His blessed presence.

*Matthew 8:12 “but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness.”*

- b. **Fire:** Fire signifies the horrible physical suffering which the unrighteous will endure in Hell.

*Matthew 3:12 “His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*

- c. **Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth:** Hell will be a place of endless remorse and unspeakable suffering. The damned will wail in agony and grind their teeth in bitterness.

*Matthew 13:50 “and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

- d. **Punishment:** Hell will be a place of final retribution where its residents will reap the consequences of their sin.

*Matthew 25:46 “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

- e. **Death and Destruction:** This speaks of eternal ruin, the wretched existence to which the unrepentant will be condemned. They will be destroyed forever.

*Revelation 20:14-15 “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”*

3. **It will be Inhabited:** Hell is not merely an idle threat or abstract construct that Jesus manufactured to get us to behave. It is a real place and a genuine possibility for those who do not repent. Thus, in a vision of the future John describes the fate of the lost.

*Revelation 21:8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*

- Why does God give us such an explicit portrait of Hell?

## **B. Biblical Assessment:**

Clearly, the uncomfortable doctrine of eternal, conscious punishment for sin is what the Scriptures teach. To deny it is as irresponsible as a doctor ignoring clear signs of insipient cancer in his patients. We must face the sober reality of the Biblical teaching and warn people accordingly.

Hell is a frightening place which rightfully disturbs many people. The violent description of the abode of the damned has lasting implications on how we minister, view the Lord, and appreciate Christ's work on the cross. The doctrine of everlasting punishment should give us an urgency and zeal in our appeal to the unrepentant. The fires of Hell ought to generate a profound fear of the Lord and disdain for sin, as the ferocity of His wrath reveals the intensity of His hatred for sin. Finally, we should bow in humble adoration at the work of Christ. 2,000 years ago He underwent the ferociousness of God's wrath, the same wrath which will be poured out in Hell, on our behalf. Truly God has been gracious in rescuing us from what we rightfully deserve. May this study cause us to tremble at the Word of the Lord and zealously proclaim the hope of salvation to the lost.

## **VI. Heaven:**

The Scriptures do not give us a great deal of information about heaven. Perhaps this is because since it is so far beyond our present experience we can't even begin to imagine what it will be like. Still, the Bible presents some clues which will lead us to await this final destiny with eager anticipation.

### **A. It will be on earth:**

*Romans 8:19-23 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.*

*2 Peter 3:7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

*2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up<sup>13</sup>.*

*Revelation 20:11-12 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.*

*Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.*

#### **B. There Will Be a Full Unhindered Fellowship with God.**

*Revelation 21:2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*Revelation 21:22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*

*Revelation 22:4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.*

#### **C. There Will Be Elements Missing from Our Experience:**

*Revelation 21:4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*

#### **D. There Will be a New Jerusalem:**

After the creation of the new heavens and earth, the apostle John says that the beautiful holy city, the New Jerusalem, will descend from heaven to earth. The

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<sup>13</sup> Although it may seem like these verses indicate that the earth is completely replaced, yet the contrast between the fire and the flood (2 Pet. 3:5-6) indicates that this judgment is one of renovation.



city is of incredible size and beauty. It measures 1,500 miles long, 1,500 miles wide, and 1,500 miles high (**Rev. 21:16**). It is not only declared to be beautiful, like a bride adorned for her husband (v. 2), but is said to have gates of pearl, buildings of pure gold, and foundation stones of precious gems (vv. 17-21). In it will dwell the Lord and His people. “The city will serve as the eternal abode of several groups. It will be inhabited by the entire Triune God, the entire angelic host, the church saints, and the spirits of just men who are the Old Testament Saints.”<sup>14</sup>

- How would you respond to someone who quips that heaven sounds boring?

## VII. Conclusion:

A proper perspective of the future helps us to keep our present in perspective. Knowing that Christ can come back at any moment should prompt us to personal holiness. The reality of Hell should move us to share our faith and warn others of the wrath to come. Our certain future in heaven should lead us to persevere in faith forsaking the empty promises of the present world for the precious weight of glory in the next. May we be mindful of the future so that we obey the commandment of the apostle Paul in **Colossians 3:1-4**:

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

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<sup>14</sup> Paul N. Benware. Understanding End Times Prophecy (Chicago: Moody1995) p. 289,