

CHRISTIAN DESTINY (ESCHATOLOGY) LAST THINGS
BOOK OF DANIEL (OLD TESTAMENT)
BOOK OF REVELATION (NEW TESTAMENT)

OPEN: CREED

DEFINITIONS

SALVATION. A comprehensive term for being delivered from personal or collective suffering and evil. The Passover recalls the deliverance through the water of a people threatened with genocide. Human deliverers often play a part, but in salvation God's role alone is decisive. The OT may highlight the this-worldly nature of salvation, but the Sinai covenant and its aftermath always include spiritual, other-worldly elements. Prophetic, eschatological, and clearly apocalyptic promises pointed to a future salvation to come from God. The NT stresses liberation from the bondage to sin and death. Mary's son is called Jesus because "he will save his people from their sins." The "rule of God" and the "kingdom of heaven" are reverent circumlocutions for the divine salvation that will reach its climax at the eschaton. Practically every page of the Bible has something to say, directly or indirectly, about salvation, its nature and its mediation. The *Benedictus* is perhaps the finest biblical prayer of thanksgiving for God's saving interventions.

ESCHATOLOGY. That branch of systematic theology which studies God's final kingdom as expressed by its OT preparation, the preaching of Jesus, and the teaching of the NT church. According to Albert Schweitzer, Jesus mistakenly expected the imminent coming of the kingdom. According to the opposite thesis of realized eschatology, represented by Charles Harold Dodd, Jesus announced that with his ministry the essential elements of the kingdom had already come. Mediating positions argue for a kingdom already inaugurated with the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but still to be consummated when Christ comes in glory to judge the living and the dead. More than a mere branch of theology, eschatology denotes that future-directedness of our entire present existence.

BEATIFIC VISION. That immediate and fulfilling vision of God in heaven that will constitute the core of eternal happiness for the redeemed.

DEATH. The definitive end of our biological existence whereby the history of our life before God assumes its complete, irreversible shape. The Bible sees death both as natural and as the consequence of sin. Death will be the last enemy to be overcome through our sharing in Christ's resurrection.

PARTICULAR JUDGEMENT. When we die.

HEAVEN. According to primitive religious understanding, the place in or beyond the sky where the gods live. The Bible reflects an early cosmology about the vault of heaven resting on pillars. It speaks of heaven as the place where God is enthroned and from which God descends but recognizes that “heaven and earth” cannot contain God. At the end new heavens and a new earth will be created, heaven being the “place” or state where the blessed will dwell forever with God through Christ’s glorified humanity.

HELL. The place or state where devils and unrepentant sinners suffer forever. This eternal punishment, which varies according to the gravity of the sins committed, consists in exclusion from God’s presence and in suffering from an unextinguishable but unspecified “fire.” Church teaching follows the NT by insisting on the possibility of hell for those who through free malice refuse to love God and their neighbors. But it makes no claims about the number of the damned. God’s saving love for all remains a fundamental and effective force.

PURGATORY. State of those who die in God’s friendship but who still need their personal sins to be expiated (through the merits of Christ) and who should grow spiritually before enjoying the beatific vision. The scriptural passages that have been adduced do not as such establish the existence of purgatory. It can be validated in the light of divine justice and by the fact of Christians praying (attested at least since the second century, as in the tomb inscription of Abercius, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia (in modern Turkey), and celebrating the Eucharist (attested at least since the third century) for their dead. In line with this practice, Greek authors like St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and St. John Chrysostom, and Latin authors like Tertullian, St Cyprian, and St. Augustine of Hippo wrote in various ways of purification after death and our communion through prayer with our dear departed. Praying for the dead has remained a typical feature of Eastern and Western liturgies. The Second Council of Lyons and the Council of Florence taught the cleansing suffering endured after death (by those not yet fit for the beatific vision) and the value of prayers and pious works offered on their behalf – avoiding, however, the language of fire, which the Orthodox oppose. Martin Luther rejected first the value of indulgences for the dead and then the very existence of purgatory. The Council of Trent maintained the doctrine of purgatory, said nothing about the nature and duration of purgatory, and reiterated the value of offering prayers and the Eucharist for those in purgatory. The Second Vatican Council briefly recalled our communion with those being purified after death and endorsed the teaching of Florence and Trent. The state of purgatory can be understood as a final process of loving but painful maturation before we see God face to face. With the last judgement purgatory will come to an end.

FINAL JUDGEMENT. Christ’s second coming. End of time.

This is our faith (Pennock)

Pg. 153 MT 25:31-32 Separates sheep from goats
 25:35-36 Gave me food . . .
 RV 22:30 Second Coming

PAROUSIA. The official visit of a ruler. From the earliest Christian documents the *parousia* designated the return of Christ in glory at the end of history to judge the world. This will be “the day of the Lord” when Christ “will appear a second time” –an appearance for which Christians wait with patience. The Synoptics link the expectation of the end with a warning to keep on watch. John’s gospel speaks of the resurrection to come on the “last day.” Christ’s future coming in glory to judge the living and the dead is confessed by various creeds. More than Western Christianity, the East highlights the collective dimension of that future consummation when God will be “all in all.” Some modern theologians prefer not to speak of the “second coming,” since the *Parousia* is only the ultimate consequence of Christ’s first coming in the incarnation. With Karl Rahner we might say that it is the world that will come to God in the *Parousia* rather than Christ to the world.

RESURRECTION. Not a mere return to earthly life, like the resuscitation of the daughter of Jairus, but the passage of Jesus through death to his definitive, transformed life that has inaugurated the final resurrection of human beings and their world. This central truth of faith formed the initial proclamation of Christians, who practically defined God (the Father) in terms of having raised Jesus from the dead. Later NT traditions, church teaching, and creeds spoke of Christ (as divine) rising by his own power. Through his appearances, the first disciples came to know that Jesus was risen from the dead. The discovery of the empty tomb by Mary Magdalene (probably with one or more women companions) served as a secondary, negative sign confirming the event of the resurrection. As the climax of divine revelation the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, together with the sending of the Holy Spirit, contains implicitly all the basic Christian truths. Hence the paschal mystery needs to be explored not only in its factuality but also as the mystery of revelation, redemption, faith, hope, and love.

Death is natural – separation of our body and soul

At death particular judgement

Did we accept God? Love our neighbor?

Were we self centered? Evil?

Fr. Mike Schmitz Videos:

The Greatest Surprise: Jesus’ Second Coming

Heaven: Your Not Good Enough (and why that’s ok)

Hell is for real