

He Gave Us Prophets

LESSON
EIGHT

Unfolding Eschatology
Discussion Forum



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He Gave Us Prophets

Lesson Eight: Unfolding Eschatology

Discussion Forum

With

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Dr. Greg Perry
Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.
Dr. Timothy E. Saleska
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Dr. Daniel Treier
Dr. Bill Ury

Question 1:

What is eschatology?

Dr. Constantine R. Campbell

Eschatology is a fancy theological term that comes from two Greek words — *eschatos*, meaning “last,” and *logos*, meaning “word.” So, it’s the “study of the last things.” And there’s a strict way of speaking about it and then a broad way of speaking about it. The strict way is simply to talk about what will happen at the end of time when Jesus returns, what will that look like and so on and so forth. But the broader way to think about it is what actually does the New Testament, in particular, and the Bible as a whole say about how the end affects life now? So, for example, the fact that we are living in an “inaugurated eschatology,” an overlap of the old and the new, means that actually we can talk about eschatology and how it affects our life now. It’s not simply things off in the distant future that will happen one day, but actually something that has broken into our current life and experience now.

Dr. Keith Mathison

Eschatology, the word, has traditionally been defined as “the doctrine of the last things” based on the etymology of the word *eschatos* and *logos* — *eschatos* meaning the last things — and it’s traditionally had to do with both individual eschatology and what we might call “cosmic eschatology.” Individual eschatology deals with death and the intermediate state; cosmic eschatology, things like the second coming of Christ, the final judgment, the general resurrection and eternal destinies, heaven and hell. I like to look at eschatology in a broader sense, however. If we, if eschatology is associated with the second coming only, then we lose a lot of the eschatological aspects in the Gospels and in the teachings of Paul... Christ’s first coming was just as eschatological as his second coming, and if we see that and understand that, then we can start to have a broader biblical, theological view of eschatology, and the last

things began with the first coming of Christ. If we understand that, we realize that, also all of the Old Testament preparing for the first coming of Christ and looking forward to it is also eschatological. So, eschatology really begins with Genesis and ends with the book of Revelation. And a lot of people today get excited about eschatology because they get excited about “pinning the tail on the Antichrist” and figuring out, you know, all these dates. For me, the most exciting part about eschatology is the christological aspect of it. If we look at the first verses of Revelation 21 and 22 that describe the new heavens and earth, it talks about the doing away with pain and death and dying and sorrow. There will be no more of these things; the former things have passed away. And that’s great, but even better is that we’re going to be face to face with Jesus Christ. That’s what excites me about eschatology, not trying to figure out when the second coming or when the rapture is going to be, or whether this person or that person is the Antichrist. It’s being face to face with Christ that is the heart of eschatology.

Dr. Robert G. Lister

Eschatology, in the simplest definition of the word, is the study of the end times or the study of the last things, and so when we use the term in its simple sense, that’s all that it involves, is the study of the end times. We can apply eschatology in a couple of other particular senses. We can think of it in an individual or a personal way, and when we do that, we’re asking questions like: What happens to individuals, be they a believer or an unbeliever, following their death in this life, provided that that death takes place prior to the return of Christ? What about the intermediate state? Is there a separation of body and soul? What does the resurrection to judgment look like for individuals? On what basis does that judgment take place? And then, that individual’s reward in heaven or judgment in hell, what might that look like? Individual eschatology is what we’re talking about there. We might also think of cosmic or global eschatology, and there we’re thinking on a broader level, not just, what do the end times look like for individuals, and what are the implications for them? But what are God’s global purposes in the culmination of his plan of redemption for this earth? And there we would include broader discussions of things like the millennium in Revelation 20 — some competing interpretations on that. What is God’s plan for the new heavens and the new earth? Is it primarily spiritual? Is it primarily physical? Is it a combination of the two? What does the eternal state look like when God has assigned final judgment to believers and unbelievers, the resurrection of the just and the unjust? So we can kind of talk about it in those three components — the broad definition, on the one hand, the application to individuals, on the other hand, and then finally the cosmic implications of eschatology as well.

Question 2:

How does Moses use the term “latter days” in Deuteronomy 4?

Mr. Sherif Atef Fahim, translation

Moses used the term “latter days” in Deuteronomy 4:27-31. So, what did Moses teach about the latter days in these verses of Deuteronomy? He taught three things, or he prophesied that three things would happen in the latter days. He said that the people would rebel against the Lord and, as a result, they would be punished with exile and be driven out of the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. Second, after the people were taken into exile, they would repent. And when the people repented, the third thing would happen to them — the Lord would restore them from the land of their captivity to “the land,” the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. These are the three things that Moses taught would happen in the latter days in the book of Deuteronomy: rebellion and exile, repentance, and restoration.

Andrew Abernethy, Ph.D.

There are times where you see the phrase “latter days” used, say, in the Pentateuch. One example is at the end of Deuteronomy 4. Now, we need to be careful when we see the term “latter days” that we don’t automatically jump ahead to the final, ultimate end of things, such as the eschaton. But in that context, what Moses is warning Israel about — as they’re about to enter the Promised Land — that when they get into the Promised Land, he says that if they disobey God and don’t follow what’s expected in the Sinai covenant that ultimately they could be kicked out of the Promised Land and sent into exile. So, what Moses is warning or speaking about is once they’ve been kicked out of the land, are in exile due to disobedience, what he says, though, is there is still hope for those people who have been kicked out of the land, that in the latter days they can turn to God and call upon him and bring them back. And of course this is a wonderful glimpse of our God who is willing to not give up on his people, but bring them back and restore them, which lays a great theological basis for who God is — a God who restores, a God who redeems even after sin. That provides a basis for understanding God’s later acts in the person of Jesus Christ and what he will do in the end ultimately.

Question 3:

What does Joel 2 teach us about the “day of the Lord”?

Dr. Timothy E. Saleska

The “day of the Lord” is a powerful concept in, especially, the Prophets, and it’s a very complex term and one that really exemplifies the richness of our Christian faith and our Christian hope. In the Prophets, the day of the Lord really was this hoped for time when God would again visit his people. As the prophets talk about it, they talk about it in two different ways. First of all, as a day of judgment — against, first of all, the people of Israel and a day of judgment against their enemies — but also a day of salvation for his people... Sometimes their speech blends in from one to the other,

and the reason they do that is because the prophets want us to see the one in connection with the other. In other words, the historical days of judgment and salvation that we see God at work in history are ultimately foreshadowings or foretastes of *the* ultimate day of salvation. So that, for example, in the book of Joel you have the interesting case in which he seems to go from the historical day, to the eschatological day, and sometimes he's talking about what seems to be the historical day, but dresses it up in universal or eschatological language, especially in Joel 2... And so, it's very interesting to see that. Notice that the day of judgment, when we're talking especially about in eschatological terms, is a day in which, as I said before, the enemies would be judged, creation would be undone. The day of grace, or salvation, is filled with the presence of Yahweh amongst his people, the emphasis on the forgiveness of their sins, the renewal of creation. You see the promise of universal peace and unity among God's people.

Dr. Paul Gardner

One of the interesting terms that comes up in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament is that phrase, the "day of the Lord." And it is the day that the prophets refer to when God will save his people and when he will judge the nations... In Joel 2:31, we read this:

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Joel 2:31, NIV).

It's a day of judgment for Joel, and yet it is also a great day of salvation. He goes on, and he says,

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls (Joel 2:32, NIV).

In the New Testament, of course, that is now taken up, and we understand it to be the time when Christ returns in glory, when he vindicates his people, and when his own name is vindicated in both the judgment, on the one hand, and in the great salvation and blessing of the end days for his people.

Question 4:

Why was Israel not fully restored after the 70 years of exile were completed?

Mr. Sherif Atef Fahim, translation

Why wasn't Israel fully restored after the 70 years of exile were completed? The reason was simply because the people were still living in sin. This is clear in the book of Daniel. At the beginning of chapter 9, Daniel says, "I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the

desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years.” Yet, instead of rejoicing that these years were ending, Daniel was distraught, and he prayed, saying, “O Lord forgive us!” He confessed his sins and the sins of his people, because he knew that the people hadn’t repented and that the condition for restoration was that the people must repent. Indeed, the people didn’t repent, and Daniel prayed that the Lord might restore them according to his mercy and for the sake of his name. Unfortunately, Israel neither fully repented nor was fully restored after the 70 years because they were still living in sin.

Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

One of the most perplexing questions that Christians have had to deal with, and they’ve done it in a variety of ways, is why the restoration — during the days of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah — why it did not move forward like one would expect if you read the prophets. In Jeremiah 25 and 29, the prophet Jeremiah says that the exile will come to an end in 70 years, and he also adds to that that the nations that persecuted Israel would collapse, they would come under the judgment of God, and that the great promises of restoration, of nature, and prosperity for Israel would come at that time too. So, it’s a problem when you think about what actually happened. And what actually happened was there was the beginning of restoration, and good things were happening. Eventually, they built the temple, and there were some positive things happening, but troubles came against that community and when they returned to the Promised Land... But what we have to remember is that when prophets predict the future, there is still this factor that if people don’t respond properly to the warnings and to the offers of blessing, then God will adjust the way he is going to fulfill these things. And this is why we have passages like Daniel 9 that really focuses on why the 70 years of Jeremiah is extended times seven to 490 years... It’s clearly a reference back, an allusion back to Leviticus 26 where God says, “I will discipline my people, and if they repent, great. But if they don’t, then I’ll multiply their discipline seven times, and then seven times more, and seven times more, and seven times more.” Now, in Leviticus 26, the end of that seven times, the multiplication seven times, is the great exile. Well, then what happens when Israel goes into exile and returns and they still do not repent as they ought? Well, this is precisely what Daniel explains in Daniel 9. God multiplies their judgment another seven times, from 70 years to 490 years... And even more than that, it’s also one of the reasons why we have books like Ezra and Nehemiah, because Ezra and Nehemiah go in detail as to what went wrong. Why was it that things did not unfold as one would expect from the prophetic word? And it was because the Israelites who returned continued to delay their response to God. It was nominal at best at first. They refused to build the temple. As the prophet Haggai said, “You continue to live in houses of cedar but the house of God lies in ruins”... And they also refused to repent from their hearts and sincerely turn to God. And that’s what you find in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. In fact, it’s so bad by the time the prophet Malachi does his ministry that Malachi says there’s going to have to be another radical intervention by God to straighten things out, and that he will have to purify the sons of Levi, and that there will be a dramatic, catastrophic event that will finally bring Israel to the stage where it begins to receive the blessings that were promised to them after the exile.

Question 5:**What does Leviticus 26 teach us about how God's judgment might be increased when Israel doesn't repent?****Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation**

Leviticus 26 teaches us many things about God's patience in bringing divine judgment over the people. To understand God's patience in this chapter, we have to review quickly the division of this chapter. In verses 1 and 2, there is a request for full obedience to the Lord. Verses 3 through 13 talk about the blessings the Lord promised the people as a result of their obedience to the laws and rules. Verses 14 through 39 list the curses that will be the sanctions for disobedience and rebellion against the Lord. In verses 40 through 45, the Lord offers a way out of judgment through repentance and returning to the Lord. And the last verse, verse 46, is an epilogue. God's patience is revealed in this chapter in a very clear way. There is a progression in the judgment. For example, verses 14 through 17 tell us that the judgment will come in the form of diseases and defeat from their enemies. Yet, there is always an opportunity for repentance and returning to the Lord. However, if there is no repentance and returning to the Lord, judgment will be multiplied seven times. The term "seven times" is repeated more than once in this chapter — in verses 18 through 21, 23 and 24, and 27 and 28. But there is also an opportunity for repentance and returning to the Lord in verses 40 through 45. So, the Lord offers many opportunities for repentance and returning to him. And there is also a progression in judgment, but with every progression and increase in the severity of judgment, there is always a chance to repent and return to the Lord.

Rev. Michael J. Glodo

Leviticus 26 has a lot to teach us about the nature of divine judgment. You see that God anticipates potential future disobedience by Israel, and that ... he's going to call his people back to repentance so that they can avoid the curses of the covenant. But you see this almost like a cascade in Leviticus 26. The warnings are going to be repeated, and they're going to be extended. It's not as if God is a referee, that as soon as the foot touches the out of bounds mark, you know, he throws the penalty flag. And really, you see this reflected largely in the book of Deuteronomy where God rehearses Israel's stiff-necked rebellion over time and his patience with them. It's where we see God's faithfulness manifested in his longsuffering.

Question 6:**What is the Old Testament background of the New Testament gospel?****Dr. Greg Perry**

We get a couple of very important terms about gospel ministry from the prophet Isaiah. One comes from Isaiah 43, in this phrase: "You shall be my witnesses." It's a phrase that we hear in Acts 1:8 when Jesus is sending out his witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit. The question is, witnesses to what? And the context of Isaiah 43

tells us, and that is, a witness to the nations that I am the only God, the only one who saves, the only king, that the only true kingdom, the only true Lord is the God of Israel — Yahweh, the God who saves, the God who redeems his people and the God who reigns, the Lord who reigns. So, we have that one term from Isaiah 43 that is very important for evangelism in Acts 1:8. Another important term is the term “gospel” itself in Isaiah 52: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.” Well, good news of what? Again, the importance here is the idea of God’s kingdom, that God as the king of his people has protected them in battle, has rescued them, has delivered them in battle, and that his kingdom is going to be the one that endures forever. And so, what we get in this sense of Isaiah 52 is that the gospel is connected to God’s kingship and that bringing the announcement of good news, yes, it’s about forgiveness, yes, it’s about a return to a covenant relationship with God, but what that really means is that God’s reign would be effective in our lives, in the places where we live, in every aspect of life, because if our king wins the victory in battle, then it’s going to be his law that takes root in that place, in that kingdom, in that realm. And so, two very important terms that inform our evangelism, inform our understanding of gospel ministry — the term “witness” and the term “gospel” — from Isaiah.

Dr. Craig S. Keener

When the New Testament speaks of the gospel, or the “good news,” it’s evoking imagery from the book of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 52:7, because in the context of that, God is promising to restore his people. And so, he says how blessed is the one, “the feet of those who bring good news to Zion, good news of peace, announcing, ‘Your God reigns.’” So, in the New Testament we read about the good news of peace, we read about the good news of God’s reign, God’s kingdom, and what that evokes is the promise that God is going to restore his people and bring salvation.

Question 7:

How did the Old Testament prophets characterize God’s eschatological kingdom?

Andrew Abernethy, Ph.D.

So, the idea of the kingdom of God is more of a concept that biblical theologians will use to talk about what the prophets were looking forward to. Now, each prophet has their own different flavor and way that they’re articulating things and expressing things. But when you think about a kingdom, any kingdom needs a king, any kingdom has a people, and any kingdom is in a particular place. So, one way of looking at what are the prophets looking towards, you ask, well, what are they looking for in terms of a king? Now, we might immediately think of a Davidic king. But the prophets are often looking ahead to God being the king. As you see in Isaiah 40, there’s this vision of God coming which develops in Isaiah 52 with the proclamation that God has come as king. And so, you see then that the prophets are looking for God who’s going to come as a king. So, you must ask, what does this king

care about? What does he want to bring about? Well, one of the elements that we see that God as king wants to bring about, according to the prophets, is he wants to establish justice and righteousness in this world. In a world of injustice, he wants to make things right. Now, one of the means that kings in the ancient world used to bring that about is to have kind of key leaders who would bring about those realities. Well, in the biblical vision, God the King is going to be using a Davidic king, an agent who's going to be establishing justice and righteousness in the world. So, you see in Isaiah 9 this vision of this son has been given, this child has been born. And what will that child accomplish? He will rule with justice and righteousness. In Isaiah 11, the Spirit is going to come out of a little shoot that's going to come from the stump of Jesse. And what will that Spirit enable him to do? He'll be wise but he'll also bring about justice and righteousness in this world. So, we see then that God the king will have an agent such as a Davidic king who's going to bring justice and righteousness. But we also see that God as king knows that reconciliation needs to happen between he and his sinful people, so that's where he sends, in Isaiah's vision, the suffering servant who will serve the role of dying as a substitutionary atonement for the sins of people who couldn't be right with God, for those who were sheep who have gone astray. So, we see then God using some key agents to bring about a reality where there can be justice and righteousness in the world and where there can be forgiveness of sins made possible for the people. Now, when we look at who the people are in God's kingdom, we're seeing these are people who are not just Israel. They're coming from all nations, streaming to God. And they will be like God in terms of carrying out what he cares about — justice and righteousness in this world. We'll see peace flooding the earth where lions and lambs will lie next to each other, which really, I think, is symbolic of nations who are hostile with one another having peace. So, we see then a grand vision in the Prophets of a king establishing his kingdom in this world, where he's creating a people, a community. But we need to ask what about place? And this is where Isaiah ... 65 beautifully portrays this hope of a new heaven and a new earth where all the realities where there's hunger and thirst will be reversed. There'll be great food. There'll be flowing water. It'll be like a return to Eden where the curses that were affecting creation before have been eradicated. So, this is the hope of the prophets, their hope in the kingdom, of God himself reigning as king with the people who live in line with him in a place that's like paradise.

Dr. Benjamin Gladd

The Old Testament prophets conceived of God's end-time kingdom, his eschatological kingdom, in several ways. One, when the kingdom does come, it's going to arrive all at once, for the most part. I mean, everything I'm saying is fairly general. We can find some niggles here and there, but for the most part, the kingdom is going to arrive all at once. It's not going to be staggered. Secondly, it's going to be very physical, very political. It's religion and politics in one. Thirdly, it's going to happen through the Messiah. The Messiah appears to suffer and die. We can see this from Zechariah and from Isaiah, maybe even from Daniel. So, the Messiah's going to usher it in. He's going to lead the revolt. Lastly, there's going to be a considerable amount of bloodshed, because Israel is going to have to completely dominate the

surrounding neighbors and bring everybody into subjugation around them. It's very physical; it happens all at once, very cataclysmic in other words, very terrifying. Yet it's restoration in a very full sense. But what's also attached to this — I mean, this is part of God's larger program, it's not just the kingdom that is coming in — it's God's Spirit is coming down, there's forgiveness of sin, there's resurrection, there's the new heavens and new earth. It's part of a larger program. The kingdom's arrival does not happen in piecemeal. It's kingdom and everything is working together, which is part of God's larger program, which will obviously climax in the new heavens and new earth.

Question 8:

Why do some theologians refer to the entire time from Christ's first coming to his final return as the "last days"?

Dr. Jeffrey A. Gibbs

One of the ways to think about the time that Christians find ourselves now living in, that is to say, the interval of unknown length between the first coming of Christ and his second coming, is to refer to that as — the entire period — as the last days. Now, the primary reason we do this is St. Peter does it in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2. So, St. Peter says,

And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.

So, these latter days is, to us, it seems strange. Why didn't God just accomplish salvation all at once, completely renew the earth in every way at Christ's first coming? The answer is, we don't know. We're not God. He gets to decide. But as we wait for Christ's return in glory and power, new things have started. The Holy Spirit has been poured out upon all Christians in a newer and more powerful way. God is doing new things in Jesus, sending the mission of his good news more energetically to all the nations than ever he had before. So again, God is doing new things. So, even though we await the fullness of what God will do in Jesus for his whole world and for the human race and for all who trust in him, even now, there's the paradox of the end has begun, but it hasn't yet fully been completed. And that understanding is foundational to a lot of what we do as Christians.

Dr. Bill Ury

Theologians refer to the entire time between the Lord's first coming and his second coming as the last days for a variety of reasons — not all of them do — but I can understand those that do... When we look at biblical history, there really are three basic elements. You've got the history of Israel, you have the incarnation — the life of Christ — and then the age of the church or the age where the kingdom of Jesus is made known through his Holy Spirit's power and presence which began at Pentecost. As the early church, and of course we now, two thousand years later, know a little

better, but they were expecting the Lord to return at any point. So they, in their writings, they expected the *parousia*, the appearing, the awareness of the presence of Jesus momentarily. They thought he was going to come any day. When he didn't come, they wanted to figure out why these passages talked like he was coming immediately. So, it's very, I think, understandable that people looking at it theologically would say, "Well, whatever happens after Jesus rose and went to the right hand of the Father, that is the end times, because the next step is we're going to heaven. Now we don't know how long that period is going to be, but rather than looking at it in terms of letting off of our desire to be all he wants us to be and to respond to all that he's offered to us as a church, that expectation of his soon coming is a necessary element to Christian living. So, the first creed of the church, many believe, was *maranatha* — "Come Lord." The belief in his immediate coming would be the last thing that happened before he comes again. Now, since we've had two thousand years to reflect on it, I think other people have debated that issue. But I don't think that it produces that much of a problem for interpretation or for theology. In fact, I think it actually motivates theology to consider his soon coming, his soon return in everything we're about. There's just something that adds a beautiful edge of hope and expectation to all that we do theologically if that's the case.

Dr. Mark L. Strauss

Many people think of the last days as some time in the future when the Antichrist will come or when, you know, events will climax with the second coming of Christ. But really, from a biblical perspective, the last days, or the end times begin with the first coming of Christ, in especially his life, death, and then resurrection. And why do we understand it that way? Because the Bible itself says that. For example, in Acts 2, Peter, on the day of Pentecost, quotes from Joel 2, and he says, "*In the last days* God says I will pour out my Spirit." So, he identifies the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost as in some sense the inauguration of the end times, the inauguration of the last days. The reason for that, as we look throughout Scripture, is that Christ's resurrection is not just an isolated event in human history. Christ's resurrection is viewed as the beginning of the end time resurrection, the beginning of the resurrection of the dead which will signal the last days and the consummation of history itself. Paul refers to Christ as the firstborn from the dead and the firstfruits of the resurrection. That is, his resurrection guarantees that we, too, will rise from the dead. So, he is the beginning of the end times. When Christ returns, that will be the consummation or finishing up of the end times.

Question 9:

How does the New Testament reveal that the final stage of human history came through Jesus Christ?

Dr. D.A. Carson

The epistle to the Hebrews begins with a contrast between earlier times and these last days. In earlier times, "God spoke to the fathers through the prophets in various ways and means," and so forth, "but in these last days he has spoken to us" — the

expression in the original is subtle — not just “by his Son,” as if the Son is one more prophet, but “he has spoken unto us in the ‘Son revelation.’” The climax of all of this anterior revelation is the Lord Jesus himself. It’s not that God spoke through the prophets and now he speaks through Jesus as one more prophet, but Jesus himself is the Word. That’s not the vocabulary that Hebrews uses, but in this respect, he’s like John’s gospel: “In the beginning was the Word” — God’s self-expression — “and [this self-expression] was with God, and [this self-expression] was God.” Well, in these last days, these climactic days, these consummating days, then God’s final revelation has been disclosed, and this Son shows up as the exact radiance of his glory. That’s almost saying, “the light of his light.” How do you distinguish between radiance and glory? That’s partly the point. He’s the exact stamp of the very nature and being of God. And so, the culminating revelation is in Jesus Christ, and that’s what makes this the last days. So, what you have is the coming of the final revelation and there is no more revelation of that order to be given until all that has come because of him is fulfilled. So, that’s why we live in the last time, the last hour, the last days, until the culmination comes when Jesus himself returns at the end of the age. So, there’s a kind of running tension in the epistle of the Hebrews, as in various ways in much of the New Testament, between a joyful, cheerful recognition that we are already in the last times even though there is persecution and tribulation. In the words of 1 John, we know it’s the last times because there are antichrists that are already here. But at the same time, the last battle has been fought, the supreme revelation has come. This has eclipsed the earlier revelation, and now what we’re waiting for is the culmination of all things, the glory yet to be revealed, and that’s what makes this the last times.

Dr. Fredrick Long

God has spoken to us in his Son. This is a profound statement because it’s contrasted, or set in comparison relationship, to the many ways that God has spoken in the past. So ... the fact that God has sent his Son means that he’s spoken in a final way or in a more complete way, and here I think we need to understand that there is a progression of God’s revelation to us and that there’s a culmination point with the coming of Jesus in terms of God representing himself directly in his Son. And what this means is that there’s going to be an end of a certain way of people relating to God, that is, through a cultic system with a temple. And there’s a transformation that’s taking place. And so, “last days” can be understood in the sense of a closing down of a certain system of relating to God, while God is also opening up a greater, larger, more expansive way that people can relate to God and experience his presence and his Word. And so, specifically, that Word has come in his Son, so God has spoken directly to us now in his Son, and we had better listen to what he has to say for us to continue in relationship with God and to experience the salvation he has to offer us.

Dr. Barry Joslin

“Long ago, in many portions and in many different ways, God had spoken through the prophets and to the fathers, but now,” and here it is, “in these last days he has spoken in a Son,” in *his* Son, the one who had inherited his own name, the divine name, and he rules and reigns at the right hand. And so, that’s the first sentence of the

book of Hebrews, really the first four verses, the prologue. And so, this familiar New Testament idea is that the last days had been inaugurated with the coming of Christ, the first advent of Christ and would be consummated at his return. And so, whereas the Old Testament looked towards that day of the Messiah, the age of the Messiah — we see that in something like Joel 2:28-32 — Hebrews says that time is now here. These are the last days because God has now spoken the definitive and final word in his Son. What else does he need to say? What else does he need to do? The redemption that had been anticipated, the redemption that had been promised, has now found its fulfillment, or as Paul would say, it's "Yes" and "Amen" in Christ ... but these are the last days, and the only thing left to come is Christ to return and his kingdom be consummated, which has been inaugurated in his first coming in his person and work at the cross.

Question 10:

What is inaugurated eschatology?

Dr. Dana M. Harris

Eschatology in general refers to the study, theological understanding, of the final destination of humanity and the world. So, theologians often think about three different kinds of eschatology. We can talk about *realized* eschatology, which would be the idea that eschatological teachings in the New Testament don't really refer to future events, but they've been fully accomplished in Jesus Christ already. Sometimes theologians talk about *future* eschatology, which of course then would suggest all these events are referring to future events. Many people, however, talk about *inaugurated* eschatology, which is often sometimes described as the "already, not yet" tension. This means that there are some aspects of the kingdom of God that we experience now and which Jesus ushered in when he first came, but that there are other aspects of the kingdom of God that we will not fully experience until Jesus returns.

Dr. David Correa, translation

The writers of the New Testament had the perspective that "this age" would be followed by "the age to come." So they had to make an adjustment. They maintained their firm belief and commitment that Jesus was the awaited Messiah who would bring the end of this age and would introduce the new age, or the age to come. However, we read in the New Testament that Jesus came, but he did not bring the eschaton in the way they expected. The enemies of God's people were not destroyed, and the awaited blessings of God's people, spoken of by the prophets, didn't arrive in the expected abundance. So, the New Testament writers had to make adjustments. So, we believe that while this age is still present, it is coming to its end. So, we see an overlap between the two ages, which is known as the "already but not yet" in many of the writings about New Testament eschatology.

Dr. Daniel Treier

Inaugurated eschatology is the belief that God's kingdom has been inaugurated in the first coming of Jesus Christ, but has not yet been fully consummated or realized, and won't be until his second coming to bring in the eternal state. We look at biblical texts like Luke 17:20, 21 to get at the "already" side of this inauguration. Jesus says that he has brought the kingdom of God into our midst, or he has brought it near. So, it's already here. In his person and ministry and speech, the kingdom of God has come, and this explains certain realities in the New Testament such as its appeal to Old Testament types and promises already being fulfilled in some sense, the New Testament frequently speaking of us being in the "last days," and so forth. These realities suggest that the kingdom of God is already inaugurated. But there's another set of texts that suggest that it's not yet fully consummated. Jesus tells us in the Lord's Prayer to pray, "Thy kingdom come" and gives us a sense of what it would mean for that kingdom to come when he has us pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That's something we pray for because it's not yet here. Hebrews, quoting a Psalm, acknowledges we do not yet see all things subjected under his feet. That's something we still wait for when Jesus will deliver the kingdom over to God the Father and God will be all in all. That's not yet fully the case. And so, inaugurated eschatology gets at the two-sidedness of this reality of the already and the not yet... In the meantime, the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon us as a guarantee of our future hope being fully realized and as an enablement for us to live between the times in the here and now, between Christ's first and second comings.

Dr. Gary M. Burge

Inaugurated eschatology is a distinctively Christian teaching, and it's to be compared with futurist eschatology. Let me explain. In theology, what we're saying is that the church understands that something is happening now. A portion of the future has now broken over the present, and so therefore, things are realized now in the Christian life that will not be realized at any other time in the past. They haven't been realized. So, let me give you an example. We understand that the Spirit of God now is available inside of the church; the power of God is here inside of this world. There is a concrete and tangible reality of God's presence inside of the church, and the description of that reality is actually something that comes from the future. So, what we mean is that we're not simply, as Christians, waiting for something to happen in the future. We're actually saying there is something now being birthed inside of the church, and that birthing is a work of God in the Spirit, which has been inaugurated, which has been begun by Jesus himself.

Question 11:**How are Old Testament themes of exile and restoration fulfilled now in the continuation of God's kingdom?****Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation**

The themes of exile and restoration are fulfilled now in the continuation of God's kingdom in various ways. First, the theme of exile is fulfilled now through the ministry of the church. The "seed of David according to the flesh" — humanity — is still in bondage to sin. There are still sinners and wicked people who resist submitting to the Lord and obeying him. They live in a state of spiritual exile because of the bondage of sin and the power of sin over them. Also, those who are within the covenant in the church sometimes fall under chastisement or church discipline. This is a form of exile in which a person is deprived of the Lord's blessings and fellowship with believers because of a certain sin. We still see and experience exile in our lives today in the continuation of God's kingdom. The theme of restoration is fulfilled in us today because the Holy Spirit is still the guarantor of our inheritance, dwelling in us, leading and guiding us. We still experience God's blessings in Christ on a daily basis. We still experience the Lord's protection, care, and victory over our enemies. We walk in the victory which Christ inaugurated on the cross. We still experience this victory on a daily basis by the help of the Holy Spirit in us. Thus, we see the themes of exile and restoration are continuing with us in the continuation of God's kingdom.

Pastor Doug McConnell

Well, I think as the kingdom continues to expand in the world, there's still a further re-gathering and restoration in that people are being called from every tribe and tongue and nation. Of course, in the book of Revelation that's what we look forward to, being around the throne with people from every tribe and tongue and nation. So, I think we see in that, that the gospel is going forward, and there is a restoration, because what's the goal of the restoration? Ultimately, it was not just for the Jews to be back in the land, but to be back with God, their God. And now, this Jewish God is being proclaimed by Christian missionaries throughout the world, and the nations are being brought in, and the gospel is going forward, and I think that's where we see this restoration taking place.

Question 12:**Why is it important to believe that Jesus will return to earth?****Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.**

It might be easy to think that because Christ died on the cross and ascended, because he said, "it is finished" that there's no reason for him to return. First, he said, "I'm coming back," so there's the fact that he said he's coming back, period, that we have to reckon with. Now this other part of it, though, is he's coming back as king; he's coming back to reign. And so, this is how God's rule is going to be established on the earth in the end. So, why does he need to come back? He's coming back to rule and to reign and for God's creation to be belonging fully to him in an undisputed fashion.

Dr. Voddie Baucham, Jr.

It's necessary for Jesus to return because God's work is not done. God's plan is not completed. There is creation, there was a fall, there is redemption in Christ, and there will be consummation. History is coming to a close. God is going to wrap things up. All things that are wrong will be set right. And Christ has promised that he would return. He says in John 14 that he goes to prepare a place for us, and that if he goes and prepares a place for us, he'll return and receive us unto himself. Christ is also going to return to judge the living and the dead... There are a number of reasons that the return of Christ is important, not the least of which is that the return of Christ is sort of the consummation of the resurrection of Christ. He *is* risen. He is risen indeed. But he is risen *that* he might come again. And this is what we say in the Lord's Supper. Right? "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." This is central to the message of the gospel.

Question 13:**How will the new heavens and new earth compare to the Old Testament temple?****Dr. Timothy E. Saleska**

First of all, I want to talk a little about the significance of the temple, the sanctuary of God's people. I think the most significant thing to consider when looking at the temple and the part it played in the life of God's people is the idea that the Lord was truly present there with his people. When he built the tabernacle we can see that the *kavod Yahweh*, the glory of Yahweh, dwelt there. And the significance for the people is played out in the book of Exodus after the incident of the golden calf where Yahweh threatened not to go in the midst of his people, because they were so stiff-necked, he said, and stubborn, his wrath would break out against them and wipe them out. And Moses then at that time said, "Well, if you're not going to go with us, I'm not going to go, because how will other people know that you've actually chosen us?" So, one of the distinctive things that Israel said about itself and its identity as God's people was that the Lord had chosen them as a people, to be with them and dwell with them. And so, the tabernacle, or later, the temple, was the place where the Israelites could go to be assured of God's forgiveness and his mercy, and be assured that he was for them. One of the unique things about their worship life there, then, was especially, for example, the fellowship offerings where they would eat and drink in the presence of Yahweh. And that was a little foretaste of the feast to come, as we would say it, of the eschaton, the last days, that will mark their existence in the new heavens and the new earth, so that in the sanctuary and in the worship life of God's people, whenever they went up to the sanctuary, there was the idea that they were going up there to meet Yahweh, to receive his forgiveness, assurance of his grace and salvation. So, in a sense, that too was an in-breaking of the future eschaton into the presence of God's people. It's also interesting, and you can kind of look at this when you look at the architecture of the tabernacle and then the temple, that there was a

creation theme, or a “back to Eden” theme built into the architecture and into the various art and artifacts in the tabernacle and temple, so that when they went into the temple to worship, not only did they go back in time to the restoration, to the making of things as they were before the Fall, but it was also then a reminder of how, in the future in the new heavens and the new earth, things would be like Yahweh created them to be when he said in Genesis, after he’d created this, it was all very good. And so, it’s no coincidence that when we go to the book of Revelation, Revelation 21, the new heavens and the new earth are talked about in terms of the temple — God dwelling with his people, his people in his presence, delighting in him, worshiping him. And so, the temple is a significant experience for God’s people in which they were assured of his presence and already received a foretaste of what God had in store for them for all eternity in the new age.

Dr. Jeffrey A. Gibbs

Part of the glorious vision that St. John gives us of the new heavens and the new earth, which is to say, the renewed creation, is that he shows that in some ways it’s like, but much greater and more wonderful than, the Old Testament temple. So, if we think about the promises of God in the Old Testament for the temple, it was the place where his glory would dwell. It was the place — although God was available for prayer and intercession anywhere, you could call upon him from any place — yet uniquely, his presence would be there to protect and to save and to forgive his people. It’s so striking that in Revelation 21 John says,

And I saw no temple in the city (Revelation 21:22).

— talking there about the vision of the last day and of the heavenly Jerusalem which has now come down. Again, it’s always down, the direction of salvation is always from God down to us, right? So, in the new creation there is no temple, and one way to understand that is that the promise of the Old Testament temple and of God’s saving presence has now been exploded and expanded to embrace the entire creation, so that will God dwell with his people? Yes, but in a way so great that we can scarcely imagine. Will God wipe away every tear from their eyes? Yes, and, as I like to say, we’ll *have* eyes. As Job said, “My own eyes will see him and not another.” So, it’s the Old Testament temple is the type. The new creation is the anti-type — greater, more powerful, more wonderful than we can ever imagine.

Question 14:

How should we respond to the fact that at the consummation of God’s kingdom, creation will experience God’s redemption?

Dr. Douglas Moo

I think Christians all around the world are wrestling with the impact of the environmental movement and environmental concerns. A lot of Christians are very uncertain about how to respond and what their role should be. As I understand the

Bible, it teaches ultimately that the creation itself will be affected by God's promises, that it's not just humans whom God is concerned about, it's his entire creation. So, as I read the Scripture at least, God has plans for this actual world we live on. He created it. He's concerned about it. He has a future for it. Exactly what that future will look like is hard to say. The Bible talks about a new heaven and a new earth, which I think is in some continuity with this present world but also is a transformed world, a redeemed world, a place where believers will live forever, enjoying the presence of God and Christ. I do think, therefore, that the future of what God is doing in the created world carries some implications for how we treat God's world now, that it is his creation, and we should work as his people at being very good stewards of the creation he has made and plans to redeem.

Dr. Amy L. Peeler

When the Fall happened, we know that it affected humanity. Humans sinned, and they reaped the repercussions of their sin. But Scripture also talks about how that sin has infiltrated all of God's creation. In Romans 8, Paul says that creation too is groaning, anticipating the day that God's redemption will come. And so, I think we get a picture of what that redemption will look like several places in the New Testament. I think preeminently of Revelation 21 and 22, also 1 Peter 3 that talk about a new heavens and a new earth. God will not eliminate the world. He will renew it. Now, that may come through the purging of fire and difficult trials, but all creation, the New Testament seems to indicate, will be renewed. And so, that means for us right now, we need to be good stewards of what God has given us, because it won't be destroyed and eliminated, it will be renewed. And that is the hope, not just of humanity but of all of God's creation.

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