

Your Kingdom Come: The Doctrine of Eschatology

LESSON
ONE

The Goal of Creation Discussion Forum



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Your Kingdom Come: The Doctrine of Eschatology

Lesson One: The Goal of Creation

Discussion Forum

With

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Question 1:

What is eschatology?

Dr. Constantine 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.

Rev. Dr. John W. Yates

Eschatology is the doctrine of the last things or the end times. And when we talk about eschatology, we’re really talking about the end of time as we know it and have experienced it; the end of history as it has poured out over the millennia. Eschatology is also, though, the doctrine of the purpose of things, or the direction in which things are headed. So, when we talk about the end, we’re not just talking about the period at the end of the sentence. We’re talking about the purpose to which we are headed as people created in God’s image. So eschatology is not just the end. It’s also the beginning of new and eternal and risen life in the new heavens and the new earth.

Scripture tells us a bit about what the new heavens and the new earth will look like and what our resurrected bodies will be like, but we're only really given a glimpse. So, I think of eschatology as not just the doctrine of the end times or the last things, but the time at which we transition into creation as it was meant to be and into life in all its fullness.

Rev. William W. Carr, Jr.

Eschatology is the study of the end times. For the Christian, that entails an assortment of things, all of which center on the expected and promised return of Jesus Christ to gather his faithful people to be with him forever... I think that there has been a tendency to study eschatology as if we are looking *at* a timeline, and we wind up thinking in terms of, one part of the timeline is prior history, one place on that timeline is our present, and somewhere out in the distant future is the end, the eschaton. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, and I think the Old Testament prophets, don't look, don't view eschatology that way. They are not looking at a timeline, but they are looking along time... They reckon that the condition of the people to whom they're preaching is such that it warrants God's fairly soon intervention. At the same time, they also understand that that judgment is not God's last word, and so they see God's activity for salvation of his people as a piece with his judgment activity... I think that we always, if we ... look as the prophets do, that we'll actually see eschatology as more imminent and the closing lines of the Revelation become that much more clear when the apostle says, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, come soon."

Question 2:

How did the Fall affect the created world?

Dr. Scott Manor

The Fall affected everything, including the created world. In Genesis 3, when we read about the Fall, we learn about what happens as a result of that. And so, God is communicating with Adam and Eve and saying, "You have sinned and, therefore, a lot of things are going to change." And the main thing is really the relationships. It's the relationship between God and man, between man and his wife — Adam and Eve. But here we're talking about the relationship between man and creation, and so he talks about how the relationship between Adam and the earth is going to be significantly different. Adam's toil will be much more difficult as he cultivates the ground; as he tries to develop the earth, there will be thorns, there will be thistles, there will be things which negatively influence his relationship with the earth as a result of sin. And so, fortunately, that's not the end of the story. We hear in Romans 8, actually, where Paul talks about the groaning of the earth in the same way that we groan towards that future hope that we have in Christ, where those things will no longer be true, where that relationship between the earth and Adam will be restored, where the things that are broken within the earth itself as a result of sin will be made right as well. And so, on the one hand, we read in Genesis 3 that there's a brokenness,

and yet we also read later on that that is what exists now but will not exist for all time because Christ is going to make that right.

Rev. Thaddeus J. James, Jr.

When we look at the Fall, when we look at the created world, we look at the creation again, that everything that God created was perfect, everything that God created was good. And then we go back again into Genesis 1:31, and after he created man he said that is was “very good.” Now, we enter into Genesis 3 and we have the Fall. So, now we see that everything that God created has now dramatically changed because of sin... We see that now in the Garden, work will now become toil. It’s going to be sweat. It’s going to be struggle. It’s going to be hard. What was originally beautiful in the woman in childbirth is now equally going to be pain. It’s going to be troublesome. It’s not going to be an easy task... But now, equally, what has happened to the relationship of man to God, which now is Adam now walking in the Garden in the cool of the day, because now that separation has existed between man and God. So, that innocence, that purity, that sinlessness is lost. So, we see that not only in the devastation between man and woman, between woman and God, but also now on the earth, because death has entered into the world. And so now, where there was peace among animals, now animals are fighting and destroying and killing and eating each other. Now we have weeds that are growing up in this beautiful land that God created, and we have droughts and all those things that now have come because of the devastation of sin upon this world.

Dr. Brian Fikkert

What we see happening in Genesis 3 is that when Adam and Eve fall into sin, God curses the creation, and so every square inch of the entire universe has been affected by that curse. That means that the natural world has been affected by the curse. That means we have things like poverty and we have famines and we have floods. It also means that human beings have been dramatically affected in all of our relationships. So, for example, Adam is told that as he tries to work, thorns will infest the ground making his work hard and difficult. Eve is told that there will be pains with childbearing. All of human life is affected, and that means that the systems that human beings create, the cultures that we create are distorted as well. So, things like our economic systems are broken; there’s poverty. Things like our social systems are broken; we have ethnic strife and tribalism. Our political systems are broken; we have injustices. The natural world is broken, our cultures are broken, and we ourselves are broken. The Fall has affected everything.

Question 3:

What was the initial state of creation like?

Dr. Paul Gardner

I’ve always wanted to know what it would be like to have been there when God had just created the world — to be Adam. It must have been amazing because the Bible tells us God looked, and it was good. Everything was good. When he created the sun

and the moon, the stars, when he created the animals, he looked and it was good. When he created Adam, and then Eve to be with Adam, it was good. And I can imagine a little of what that must have been like, because the Bible talks of Adam and Eve being able to walk and talk in the Garden with the Lord God. We can imagine a little bit of that, but we really can't get our heads around the beauty of all of that. To imagine a creation where everything is good, where when I sow something in the ground it actually grows, and it has the right amount of sunshine and the right amount of water, rather than getting washed out in a flood or getting dried up in a desert or whatever, I can only dream of what that must be like. It is a place, though, that sets a picture for what is to come in the new earth. In many ways, actually, the description of the new earth is of something better even than Eden because now Jesus will be there, now we will know grace, we will know God's infinite mercy and his love, and we will know what he saved us from. But it will still be this restored, beautiful place where I think, from the biblical evidence we have, which is limited, everything will just work perfectly, where we will, above all, be able to bring glory to God as we were created to do.

Dr. Brian Fikkert

In the creation what we see is God making all things good. At the end of the creation process, God announces, "It is good." That means that all of creation was able to be what God had created it to be: Giraffes could be what he created them to be, turtles could be what he created them to be, and human beings could also be what God created them to be... What the Bible teaches is that in the creation God gave each human being four key relationships. Our primary relationship is with God himself. It's a relationship in which we're to bring honor and glory to God with all that we do — it's all about him. But it's also a relationship that is to be characterized by intimacy. Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden. Our relationship with ourselves: Adam and Eve were made in the image of God. They had inherent dignity and worth, and they knew that. Relationship with others: We're to love others as much as we love ourselves. Adam and Eve had perfect community. And finally, a relationship with the rest of creation: Adam and Eve were called to be stewards over creation. That meant to both preserve and protect it, but also to create bounty. Four key relationships: God, self, others, and the rest of creation. And Adam and Eve experienced these relationships in exactly the way that God intended, because he made those relationships in a certain way, and they were good.

Question 4:

Why did God give humanity the cultural mandate?

Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.

God gave humans the cultural mandate, which we see in Genesis, really 1:26 as well as 1:28. In 1:26 when God says, "I'm going to create humans and they're going to rule," then 1:28, after he creates them, he gives them this command to rule over creation, to have dominion over creation. I call the cultural mandate, actually, the *first*

great commission, because it's really a great task. So, with this first great commission, the cultural mandate, God gives it to humans because, as part of being his image bearers, because humans are the only ones that bear the image, though the rest of creation may reflect the fact that God has made it, only humans are the ones that God says are actually in his image itself. So, as part of being in the image, as part of being human, God gives them the great responsibility, the great *commission*, of caring for his world, being the ones who have the great opportunity, I like to say, to steward the world so that it goes to its fruition, so that its potential can be developed. One way to think about that further is in Genesis 2 we kind of see it action because God comes to Adam and says, "You name the animals." God doesn't say, "Here's the names of the animals." So, you see God ... bringing the animals, so to speak, to Adam, but Adam is the one who has the responsibility of taking care of this. So, the cultural mandate is the responsibility that all of us have as humans for taking care of God's world.

Dr. Josh Moody

So, in the beginning of Genesis there's this passage, Genesis 1:26, 27, where God gives the cultural mandate. In other words, he gives us the world to take care of and to rule in his place. What Genesis is teaching there is that humans have an extraordinary responsibility in their created nature intended by God to fulfill. They are, as it were, God's vice-regents. And so, we humans, in our identity, are to think of ourselves as kings under his kingdom with a high responsibility and a great dignity to rule according to his rule. Now, humans — Genesis 3 — have grabbed not just their rule, but his rule, and taken God off the throne of his kingdom and inserted themselves there. This is original sin teaching and the great rebellion against God's rule. But though that truth is taught in Genesis 3, we should not forget the intended nature of the relationship between God and humanity, that we are made to be vice regents under his rule, little kings under his kingdom, with an enormous responsibility, and that is part of our intended dignity that is redeemed in Christ and in his kingdom as we exercise our role of blessing, good authority under his authority.

Dr. Bruce Baugus

I think to understand why God gave man the cultural mandate, it's important to remember that man was uniquely created in his own image. So, there's a structural component to the divine image — we just *are* in God's image. But then there's also the functional component, that we show and display the glory of God in the particular way that's just right for us being human by the way that we carry out and reflect his glory through the work that we do. And so, when we think about the cultural mandate, we have sort of a work to fill the earth and to subdue it, to make the world like Eden, like the Garden, and so on, but also to fill it, to populate it. And so, the idea is that we are to carry out the cultural mandate to spread the glory of God displayed uniquely in his divine image in human form to the ends of the earth for his own glory.

Question 5:

What does the cultural mandate require of humanity?

Dr. Rick Boyd

When God created humanity — we go back to Genesis 1 — and God created us in his image, male and female in his image, and said, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” And it’s not just before sin enters in; that happened before sin entered in, in chapter 3 of Genesis but even after he destroys the earth with the flood and Noah and his wife and the sons and their wives, they all get out of the ark, and he, once again, says, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” God’s given us this earth for our good and for his glory.

Andrew Abernethy, Ph.D.

When we look at Genesis 1 and we ask, “Why was humanity created?” what we see is that they were created for a very specific function. As God’s image bearers, they were given the task of ruling over and subduing creation and within that, multiplying and filling the earth to carry out that role for caring for God’s world, if you will. So, when you think of, “Why were humans created?” we need to remember that we were created to care for and, if you will, even develop from what God has initially placed upon this earth... One thing that I see students come up with a lot, and even during my church ministry, is they struggle with, “What does it look like to serve God? Should I leave my job doing computer science, or should I stop being a businessman because maybe I should go into fulltime ministry where I can preach God’s Word?” Now, there’s a value to ordained teaching ministry, but Genesis 1 reminds us that there is something extremely important, that God cares deeply about when his people are engaged with all of God’s creation and are serving as his image bearers, they’re representing him, reflecting him and allowing creation to flourish, and within that, man to flourish, humankind to flourish, as well as they carry out this call to care for God’s world.

Dr. Mark Gignilliat

If there’s a phrase that twentieth century Reformed-type people know and like to bandy about maybe more than — I shouldn’t say any other phrase, but they toss it around a lot — is a quote from Abraham Kuyper where he said, “Jesus Christ does not look at one square inch of this world and not claim, ‘This part is mine.’” The cultural mandate is a claim on Christians that this world, that all of this world, is God’s world, and because we’re made in the image of God, we go out into the world to bear witness to God in all spheres of life. This is one of the great contributions of Reformed thought, as the line between clergy and laity — though still a line that’s demarcated — does become fuzzier because every Christian is called to some vocation, whether it’s clergy or lay, and in the vocation that you’re called to, you’re called to be God’s witness, God’s emissary as he claims this whole world for himself. Whether it’s art or law or medicine or the trades, whatever it is, that is not without the purview of God’s ownership and lordship over all of creation.

Question 6:

What is the significance of what theologians call the *proto-euangelion* in Genesis 3:15?

Dr. Benjamin Gladd

The *proto-euangelion* in Genesis 3:15 is the gospel in seed form. The gospel in seed form. And what is particularly detailed in Genesis 3:15 is the overthrow of the serpent, that is, the serpent's dominion. Remarkably, the Old Testament picks up on Genesis 3:15 and alludes to it throughout. I mean, there are several texts that mention — Psalms 91 comes to mind; there are some other places even in the Pentateuch. And then the New Testament then picks up on Genesis 3:15 and continues to allude to it throughout even the Gospels, a couple places maybe in Paul and in Revelation, so that it really points to Christ's utter and full and consummate defeat of evil, of Satan... And that is hugely important when it comes to eschatology, because eschatology, much of it, has to do with how the kingdom is installed in the absolute annihilation of wickedness to completely remove the threat of evil. This was a big deal in the Garden. There in Genesis 3, Adam did not do a good job of removing the threat. He did not protect the Garden very well; the serpent just came on in. What we're going to see in the new heavens and the new earth is there is no threat to the temple, garden/new heavens and new earth. The threat of evil has been put down and now there's full righteousness with God, there's nothing incomplete.

Dr. Dana M. Harris

In Genesis 3:15 we find a remarkable promise that God gives to Eve. This is in the context of Adam and Eve having rebelled against God... It's important to understand that neither Adam nor Eve are cursed; the ground is cursed and Satan is cursed. But also in this context, Eve is given a remarkable promise: she is told that her offspring will eventually bring about the downfall of the serpent. Now, this promise actually continues through the rest of Scripture in some remarkable ways... So, we began to see this, for example with Noah, where God rescues one, and of course his family, as the means by which God will then bless the rest of creation. Let's fast forward to Abraham. With Abraham once again we see this pattern where God singles out the *one* through whom he will bless all the families on earth. This is also the logic between the choice of the nation of Israel, the *one* nation that will display the glory of God to other nations. Now, in the promises that are given to Abraham we see a promise, of course, of many things, but one of which is descendants... So, we look through the rest of the biblical record, we see that the promise of descendants begins with a concentration or focus on Isaac. But then it expands rather quickly. By the time we get to the beginning of Exodus, there are *many* descendants. Then we began to see something very interesting that happens. Once we move to the time of Samuel and then David, we began to see that this promise of descendants crystallizes in one, the promised Son. We see this very clearly in Psalm 2, where God's response to human rebellion is to say that he has installed his Son on Zion. This sets up for an understanding for how the Son will eventually point to David's greater son, Jesus

Christ. So, we put all of this together, we can see in the most remarkable way that what God promised to Eve eventually culminates in Jesus Christ.

Dr. Craig Ott

You know, the story of creation and fall is not only just foundational to our whole understanding of creation, humanity, the nature of the source of evil and so on and so forth, but it's also absolutely foundational the way we observe that God engages humanity even after the Fall. We see Adam and Eve trying to hide from God as one of their first responses, and yet our God is a God who goes seeking them. This is a theme we find throughout Scripture, of God pursuing men and women who would hide from him. Jesus said, "I came to seek and to save that which was lost." And yet, God does not only seek them out, he provides a way for them to be reconciled with himself. Now, immediately in the Garden there is the killing of an animal to provide clothing for them, and so there's shedding of blood, there's a redemptive element in there — clothing yourself with leaves would not be adequate. But more than that, God gives a promise which is somewhat veiled. We don't know the whole story yet, but he tips his hand, and he says the woman is one day going to bear a child, the seed, and that child will be wounded, but this child will one day conquer Satan who has brought the source of evil into the Garden and has led to this catastrophe. And so, God not only goes seeking after Adam and Eve to restore a relationship, but he provides that. Now, we know, of course, the rest of that very long story how that plays out and the promise to Abraham and that blessing to all nations would one day come, and God's vision to call out Israel as a people who'd be bearers of that seed, and yet, for the purpose of blessing the nations, and then ultimately with Jesus coming to fulfill that work of redemption, conquering Satan through his work on the cross, and then ultimately, through Pentecost, of bringing that message then to all nations so that all who would exercise faith might become children of Abraham and be included in this people of God.

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've 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 heavens 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. Simon Vibert

The Old Testament prophets speak about God's eschatological kingdom in passage like Isaiah 61 that looks forward in hope to the year of the Lord's favor, the day when God's message, God's *euangelion*, will be preached to the whole of creation in anticipation of the world realizing that Christ is King.

Question 8:
How does the concept of the kingdom of God appear in the Old Testament?

Dr. Vern S. Poythress

The idea of the kingdom of God is something that already appears in the Old Testament. And actually, it appears in two different ways. There's one sense in which God is always ruling from creation onwards. Psalm 103:19 says:

The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all (Psalm 103:19, ESV).

That's providence. It's comprehensive rule. But there's also a sense in which God's *saving* reign — he's always reigning, but his salvation is something that the Old Testament prophets and others looked forward to as something future. So, for instance, in Daniel 2 there's a picture of the great stone, which represents the coming kingdom of God that's going to fill the earth. And in Isaiah 52 it talks about the message of salvation, "Your God reigns," which is really saying he's coming to bring his salvific power to bear and to rescue his people.

Dr. Greg Perry

The phrase the "kingdom of God," doesn't really appear in the Old Testament, but the *concept* of God's reign is everywhere in the Old Testament. That phrase, "the Lord reigns," of course, is repeated throughout the Psalms. But this concept really starts in the very beginning of the Bible where God creates Adam and Eve as his image bearers, and this notion of bearing the image of the king is a concept that's very important in the ancient Near East as kings would want to let people know who was in charge by reproducing their image and putting their statues all around their territory, their kingdom. And so, right from the beginning of the Bible we see this concept of the reign of God through image bearing. And then it continues in covenant making. The way kings did business in the ancient Near East was to make treaties with one another, to make these covenants, and so with Abraham we see God as the great King granting land to Abraham by using these same treaty forms that the kings would use in the ancient Near East. But of course, the kingdom of God really comes to its fullest expression in the Old Testament in this covenant with David's house, and we see that the kind of king that reflects the character of God is this "man after God's own heart." And so, Psalm 72 gives us a really great example of what should the kingdom of God look like. And so, when dignitaries come to visit Jerusalem, to visit Solomon, they see that the poor are defended, that there's righteousness, there's justice, that there's mercy, that there's economic flourishing, that the way a king is to do business in terms of reflecting God's character is the way it's conducted under David's household.

Dr. Timothy E. Saleska

I think the concept of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament is one of the unifying themes of the entire Bible. The idea that Yahweh is the Creator, the one who created all things, ruled, stills rules and will always rule all things, is a concept that you see over and over at many different levels in the Old Testament. You see it especially in the creation Psalms, for example. You see it in the kingdom of God Psalms where the voices in the Psalms proclaim that it is Yahweh who reigns. What is interesting about the concept again, though, is how complex it becomes, because in the theme “the kingdom of God,” we see the idea that this Yahweh who created everything, who rules all things, chose a people for himself to be his own — Israel. And even when Israel wanted their own king, their own earthly king, it was understood by them, and especially by the king, that Yahweh was the ultimate ruler and that this king ruled by virtue of the rule of Yahweh, so that ancient Israel saw Yahweh and its king functioning as a unit together. Another thing that’s interesting about the kingdom of God in the Old Testament is that sometimes you see it visibly manifest. It’s very much on the surface. So, for example, to the extent that Solomon, for example, was faithful; he brought the characteristics of God’s kingdom very much to the surface in the peace and justice that he was able to bring to the people, to the prosperity of the country, to the peace that he had with his enemies round about. The kingdom of God seemed very much there. To the extent that the kings were disobedient and strayed from God and worshiped false gods, the kingdom of God seemed very much below the surface, so that Israel even was given into the hand of their enemies. Well, where is the kingdom of God, where is God’s reign, where is the promises to his people, you see? But always there was that underlying hope and promise that Yahweh had not forsaken and would not forsake his people, that his rule was there. You see it, for example, in something like Psalm 2 in which you have the nations raging against Yahweh and his anointed one, and on the surface it looks like they are in control, but notice in the middle of that psalm we read these words from the psalmist:

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2:4-6, NKJV).

So, there we see the psalmist who assumes that beyond what see visibly on the surface there’s another realm of reality in which Yahweh rules all things.

Question 9:

For the Jews in Jesus' day, what was the connection between the Messiah and the kingdom of God?

Dr. D.A. Carson

“Messiah” is a word that is bound up with “Anointed One,” and in the Old Testament the king was anointed, and the priests were anointed as they were appointed to their

particular roles, and on one or two occasions a prophet was anointed, like Elisha. And so, it came to be associated with expectation of One who was to come, but most commonly with kingdom, and namely with the Davidic kingdom. But you have to recognize that Jews were divided on such matters. In Qumran, for example, in the area near the Dead Sea south of Jerusalem, it's pretty clear that they expected two Messiahs: a priestly Messiah and a kingly Messiah. And what Christ does when he comes along, turns out to be king and priest. In one sense they were right, but they wanted two figures, and we have one figure being both priest and king, and prophet too, for that matter, as well. So, there was rising expectation of One who was to come, and as far as I can see, when Messiah is connected with a Coming One, most likely it's the Davidic figure who is in view, that is, the promised king in the Davidic line with prophecies going back, finally, to the seedbed of 2 Samuel 7 and reinforced by a typological reading of Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 and so forth. So, when we come to the word "Christ," which is simply the Greek equivalent of "Messiah" — when it has titular force, and I think it never loses all of its titular force in the New Testament — it's regularly a way of saying that Jesus is the Davidic king, though in the right context it might have other overtones of priesthood and authority beyond that.

Dr. Gary M. Burge

In Jesus' day when Jewish thinkers began to imagine the Messiah, they imagined some things that were very different than what Christians might say today. Jews in Jesus' day thought of the Messiah as a composite figure of the great heroic figures of the Jewish story, and in those figures, probably Moses was the most important one. Moses was a strong political leader, he was also a great spiritual man who led Israel out of Egypt, defeating Pharaoh, and establishing Israel's national identity, you might say, at Mount Sinai. So, therefore, when they thought about the Messiah, they understood that there would be a *human* character who would come into Israel's history, and this very human character would inaugurate Israel's national life. Now, you can see this in Acts 1:6 where the disciples talk to the resurrected Jesus and they say, "Lord, now in your resurrected glory, now that you have your messianic power, will you restore to Israel again the kingdom?" That's the political question. In the Judaism of Jesus' day, the Messiah would be a catalyst for the restoration of Israel's political life, its kingdom life, perhaps the restoration of the world of King David, something like that. When Jesus steps onto the stage of first century Judaism, he does not pick up those political motifs that you have in his day. He announces that he is establishing a kingdom, but this kingdom is not of this world. This is going to be a kingdom that promotes different values. This is not going to be a kingdom defined by any political body. So, on the one hand, he is using a lot the vocabulary of first century Judaism to talk about his identity as Messiah and his role in establishing the kingdom. And I imagine he frustrated a lot of people in his audience when he denied those political dimensions. When Jesus announces a kingdom which is going to be a different sort of kingdom, a kingdom whose Messiah even dies to establish itself, the frustration and discouragement among many Jewish followers probably was acute. Jesus indeed is the Messiah. Jesus is indeed establishing a kingdom. Those two ideas come together in first century Judaism, but Jesus is reframing the entire idea.

Nicholas Perrin, Ph.D.

First of all, if you're going to have a kingdom, you need a king. The Jews believed that a king-like figure, a Davidic-like figure would come and reverse the fortunes of Israel, someone who would come in, get rid of the Gentiles, establish righteousness, and reassert Yahweh's throne in Jerusalem. Now, the core of this promise goes back to 2 Samuel 7 in what we call "the Davidic covenant," where David approaches God and says, "God, I'd love to build a house for you." And God says, "Well, I've got some other plans," and so he instructs Nathan the prophet to go to David and say, "Well, you think you're going to build a house for me, I'm going to build a house for you." And so, from the time of David down through the centuries up until the first century, we have this longstanding promise that, "Your seed, O David, will sit on the throne and will rule." Now, along the way, the Jews developed certain notions as to what this Messiah would be. He would be a powerful figure, he would be a wise figure, and most Jews believed that through a political or military-type coup that the Messiah would finally, again, get rid of the Gentiles, those nasty Gentiles, and bring in the righteous rule of God. Now, Jesus reinvents that whole concept fundamentally and dramatically through his own ministry. But the concept of the messianic king he retains.

Dr. Lynn Cohick

The kingdom of God and Messiah are two huge topics in Jesus' day, and they're each, in themselves, very complicated and then together even more complicated. But let's take Messiah first. There was no consensus about what the Messiah would do specifically, but there were general expectations. The Messiah would purify the temple. The Messiah would, by extension, then purify the land, and that would mean Solomon's kingdom space, right, so Judea, probably Samaria and Galilee. And then finally, the Messiah would establish righteous rule, and that carries us, then, to "kingdom of God." "Kingdom of God" is about God's rule or reign. So, the Messiah was seen as someone who would bring in the reign of God. Now, in Jesus' day, you had aspects of Messiah that would be priestly, that would be royal, kingly, and Jesus would fit those for sure. He is from the Davidic line, the line of the kings. But Jesus also spoke about the temple and, in fact, went into the temple as one of his last deeds we find in the Synoptic Gospels, where he cleansed the temple. And people in that day would have seen that action as messianic, as someone who was ready to make the land holy and righteous before God.

Question 10:

How did Jesus' contemporaries distinguish between "this age" and the "age to come"?

Dr. Gary M. Burge

When Jesus' contemporaries thought about "this age" that they were living in and "the age to come," they really thought about these two ages as separate and distinct entities, and they saw these two ages as having a boundary between them. So,

therefore, we live in this present age in which we struggle with evil, we struggle with the incompleteness and brokenness of this world, and we hope to live lives of holiness and goodness pleasing to God. But then what they understood was a terminus was on the horizon, and at that terminus God would intervene in the world. This would be a messianic era, the Messiah would arrive, and Israel would be restored again to its national glory, and in this period, God's reign would be supreme. So, Jesus' contemporaries understood that these two eras stood side by side with a very sharp terminus in between. The remarkable thing is this, is that when Jesus announces his ministry, he says the kingdom of God is not simply *coming* — that would be Jewish — but the kingdom of God has *arrived*. That's the remarkable thing in Jesus' ministry. So, therefore, is you think of these two spheres as standing side by side with a terminus in between, what Jesus has done is he has shifted Jewish eschatology; he has moved these two spheres so now they overlap. So, Jesus is not just announcing the good news of salvation, he's announcing the arrival of Jewish expectation.

Dr. Jeffrey A. Gibbs

You know, one of the common ways that Jesus' contemporaries had of talking about the history and the world and what their God was doing was to talk about "this present age," "this age," sometimes "this present evil age," and "the coming age." They tended to talk about it as if the coming age had not yet started. It's understandable as they could see how broken the world was. The Holy Land itself had been conquered by one idolatrous empire after another — now the Romans are in power. So, as they looked at the world, it was pretty clear to them that, although the promises that had been given, especially through the prophets, were *certain* promises, that they simply hadn't begun yet to be fulfilled. So, it's as if the two ages are lined up against one another, or next to one another, but there's no overlap. And, of course, the marvelous and shocking thing about first, John the Baptist's and then Christ's ministry himself, is the claim, the paradox that, even as the power of the evil age, Satan, and sin, Satan's allies, continues, God has begun to do something new in Jesus. So, when John says the reign of God has come nearer, they're actually claiming that the new thing that God had promised to do, he has actually begun to do in Jesus.

Dr. Stephen E. Witmer

Jesus' contemporaries understood the whole of history to be divided into two ages: "this age," and "the age to come." "This age" is the age of suffering, death, persecution sometimes for God's people; God's people struggle, even the righteous don't prosper... "The age to come" is understood as the time where God finally vindicates his suffering people, where righteousness is established, where God judges his enemies in the end. And so, there's a huge disjunct between this age and the age to come. Jesus himself thought in these terms, so he talks about those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, there's not forgiveness for them in this age or the age to come. The apostle Paul in Galatians 1 says that Jesus gave himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age. So, the New Testament authors themselves are thinking in these terms. And it really is, I think, both a realistic and a hopeful view of

history. So, it's realistic because Jesus and his fellow New Testament authors recognize that we're not in the age to come yet. God's people are not vindicated; God's people often suffer. And yet, at the same time, it's hopeful because the age to come is coming. It's going to come. God's people will be saved.

Question 11:

Why does God sometimes put conditions on his prophecies?

Andrew Abernethy, Ph.D.

It's common in the prophecies in the Old Testament for God to attach conditions to them, such as, "If you don't repent you are going to experience judgment." A wonderful kind of glimpse at this way that God works with his prophecies is in Jeremiah 18 where you have this symbolic experience where Jeremiah has been told to go down to the potter's house and he's observing a potter forming clay, and then all of a sudden the clay becomes warped and the potter starts over again. And God draws upon that to give a teaching lesson for a prophecy that Jeremiah is supposed to give, which is that Israel is told that if they don't repent that they're going to experience judgment. God could change that, because if they do repent, God will change his plan for judgment, if you will, of destroying the pot and remake it now, Israel, into a restored community. But on the flipside, God says, "If I've promised to bring good to you but you instead start doing evil," he could change his mind too, and he could bring judgment. So, this is a typical way that prophecy works, where God is framing his call for repentance in light of prospective judgment, but also warning those who think they're destined for a good life that judgment could meet them too if they are not righteous.

Dr. Mark Gignilliat

God puts conditions on his prophecies and the prophets in some sense to remind us that God's interaction with his people is a lived and dynamic interaction; it's a relationship, it's a covenant, it's a covenant that he's determined to enter into with people. And so, when God makes a prophecy or gives a prophetic announcement against his people, he will put conditions into that at times to provide, again, that dynamic relationship that gives room for real response in time and space. And those responses matter. And sometimes these qualifications that are made are qualifications that are reminders — "I've claimed you, you're mine; come back to me." You see this throughout Jeremiah's prophecies from beginning to end. "Why is this bad thing happening to us?" they ask in Jeremiah, in his book, and the answer is, "Because God has claimed you and you've turned away from him." So, these conditions are given to the people to remind them of their covenantal relationship with God and their commitment to that. And sometimes these qualifications are stated in very clear ways, and sometimes they're unstated qualifications. I think the most famous one is in Jonah. Jonah gives us the smallest sermon in history: Forty days and Nineveh is destroyed. But then ... the Ninevites actually, the pagans, turn and God relents from his judgment. I think what you see there is a prophetic statement that has an unstated

qualification. And when you get into Jonah 4, you can see that Jonah's not real happy about the fact that God pulled back, he relented from his destruction toward the Ninevites. And the reason why Jonah was angry — and I think this gets at the heart of these prophetic qualifications — the reason why Jonah was so angry was because he knew the character of God: God's gracious, "you're compassionate; I knew that you are quick to forgive, and you're doing it with the wrong people" — in the book of Jonah. So, these qualifications that come into the prophetic announcements are rooted in a covenantal relationship with God and his people.

Question 12: **What is inaugurated eschatology?**

Dr. Danny Akin

I'm an advocate of what is called "inaugurated eschatology." It's kind of a *via media*, or if you like, "a middle way" between what is called "realized eschatology" — the kingdom is already here in its fullness — and "futuristic eschatology," which says none of the kingdom is here and we're still looking for all of it to come in the future. Inaugurated eschatology, I think, is true to the New Testament because it teaches that with the coming of the King, the kingdom *has begun*, the kingdom *has inaugurated*. That small mustard seed has been planted. But, we still await the full fruition of the kingdom where the glory of King Jesus is seen cosmically and universally. So, is the kingdom here? Yes. Is it here in all of its fullness? No. It has been inaugurated. It has begun, but its full flowering will only come to realization when Jesus comes again.

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... 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. Keith Mathison

Inaugurated eschatology is a view that sees the last days foretold by the Old Testament as having already begun with the first advent of Christ as opposed to a completely futurist eschatology, which sees eschatological events as still being in our future, or a completely realized eschatology which sees all the events as already fulfilled, commonly associated with Oscar Cullmann who used D-Day, V-Day analogy to illustrate this, where the first coming of Christ is associated with D-Day. It's the decisive battle that wins the war, present age is the time between D-Day and V-Day in which the armies are progressing forward towards Berlin, and then V-Day would be analogous to the second coming of Christ when the consummation occurs, the final judgment, second coming and all of those final events.

Question 13:

What kinds of tensions do Christians feel during the overlap of “this age” and the “age to come”?

Dr. Guy Waters

Christians do live in the overlap of this age and the age to come. Paul tells the Galatians that Christ has rescued us from this present evil age. Paul tells Titus that we continue to live in this present evil age. And so, we feel that tension. Part of that means that we continue to sin; we don't delight in that, we don't rejoice in it, but that sin is a sad but constant factor of our existence. We're not under its lordship, but like Paul in Romans 7, we grieve under its presence. We continue to experience death. Unless Jesus returns before then, we should prepare to die, and that's part of living in a world that lies under the curse, that groans, as Paul says in Romans 8. But even as we feel these things, and we should feel these things as Christians, we have gospel hope that sin and death and curse are not the last word, that Christ has won the victory, and part of our eagerness for him to return is that when he comes, then all things truly will be made new.

Dr. Dana M. Harris

When Jesus came, he ushered in the kingdom of God. For us right now this is a spiritual reality in the present time on earth, but one day it will be a physical reality when Jesus returns. So, as believers, we're caught in a tension, which is sometimes described as “the already-not yet.” Part of the already is the fact that we have the Holy Spirit as a down payment. This is what Paul talks about in Ephesians 1:14. This down payment is an assurance that we will one day have our eternal inheritance. We also experience this in the reality of spiritual gifts and the spiritual bond that we feel between believers around the world. But we also know that we live in a world that is wracked by evil and is still under the effects of a world in condemnation. So, we look

forward to that day when we will see Jesus face to face and when he will return and bring about the complete and total eradication of evil.

Rev. Rico Tice

In terms of the tensions that Christians feel in the overlap between this age and the age to come, I think what best sums up those tensions and how we deal with them, or how we sort of in our mind handle that tension is understanding the three tenses of salvation. Past tense: I have been saved from the penalty of sin — that’s justification. Present tense: I am being saved from the power of sin — that’s sanctification. Future: I shall be saved from the presence of sin. And it’s seeing those three things; so, I have been saved by the penalty. Thank you, Lord, Christ died for me, I have his righteousness. I am being saved from the power. Every day I’m trying to put to death my sinful nature, but it’s an ongoing battle. But one day, wonderfully I shall be saved from the presence of sin. And as I hold those three — past, present and future — as I hold them together and as I see what they mean, I think it enables me to live wisely. I’m so looking forward to being free of sin. I’m so grateful my sin has been paid for and the penalty has been dealt with. Now, Lord, help me in the present to battle sin. I’m not going to always be victorious. It’s ongoing repentance, but at the same time, hopefully there will be change, I’ll be growing more like Christ and looking forward to the future.

Question 14:

What did Isaiah mean by the term “good news”?

Dr. Paul Gardner

The term “good news,” which we use often in Christian-speak because it is the translation of the word “gospel” in the New Testament, the term actually starts way back in the Old Testament with the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah 40:9 we read this:

You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!” (Isaiah 40:9).

And then Isaiah picks up this idea later on in chapter 61 as well as he speaks of the proclamation that God has given him, that God will save the people. How it is going to happen is not made clear by Isaiah. His prophetic word is that one day God will come and God will judge those who have taken his people away into captivity, those who have actually been used to bring God’s judgment on his people for their rebellion. God will come and will vindicate his people and will vindicate his name. And that’s the good news. Now, those tidings, he tells us in chapter 61, are to be preached to all the nations, not just to his people. But the picture is of God’s people hearing at last that they are going to be restored to being a people in a relationship

with him, and that gives rise then to Jesus being able to come along and quote Isaiah and identify as the one who is the substance of the good news.

Dr. Simon Vibert

Passages like Isaiah 61 speak about the “good news” as prophesied in the Old Testament. For example:

The Spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor (Isaiah 61:1).

Isaiah then goes on to speak about binding up the brokenhearted and good news for the poor. And the promise that Isaiah makes here is that there will be a day in which all wrongs are righted with the coming of the Messiah. But at this point, we recognize that the good news isn't being preached to the nations, but we yet wait for the full fulfillment of the coming of justice on earth.

Question 15:

How will the creation experience God's redemption?

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... I think preeminently of Revelation 21, 22 ... that talk about a new heaven 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.

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. Randy Alcorn

How will creation experience God's redemption? Romans 8 talks about how the whole creation is under bondage, that it's groaning, or under the curse, and it talks about not only we groan as people, but the creation itself groans... The whole creation is groaning. And sometimes we narrow Christ's redemptive work as if all he does is snatch souls out of this world to go to heaven forever. And he's concerned about the redemption of our bodies, and the creation that fell under us, that fell on our coattails, so to speak, will rise on our coattails, looks forward to our redemption, the redemption of our bodies, the resurrection. And this is the great promise of God, that even as we led creation into destruction we will lead it out, or Christ through our resurrection, will lead it out of destruction so that there will be a new heavens and a new earth, a new redeemed universe.

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