

Your Kingdom Come: The Doctrine of Eschatology

Study Guide

LESSON
THREE

THE COMING OF THE
KING



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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

Eschatology – the study or doctrine of last things

Individual eschatology – the study of how individual human beings experience the events of the last days

General eschatology – the study of God’s universal acts of judgment and salvation in the last days

II. The Return of Christ (2:20)

Jesus assured his followers that he would eventually return (Matthew 24–25; John 14–17; Acts 1:10-11).

Jesus’ return is taught throughout the New Testament and has always been a central article of faith in Christian theology.

A. Necessity (5:41)

Wealthier Christians often struggle to place sufficient value on the kingdom that Jesus will consummate when he returns.

Christians who suffer for their faith often find it easier to look forward to the perfect world Jesus will bring.

1. Abraham's Heir (8:04)

God's covenant with Abraham includes the promise of land for Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15, 17).

Paul interpreted this promise to mean that Abraham and his descendants would inherit the entire world (Romans 4:13).

After testing Abraham and sparing his son Isaac, God confirmed that his covenant blessings would be realized through Isaac to the entire world (Genesis 22:17-18).

Isaac was a "type" or foreshadow that prefigured Christ.

God's promises would *ultimately* be fulfilled through Isaac's descendant Jesus.

Jesus has to come back personally, so that the promises to Abraham and Isaac can be fulfilled.

2. David's Heir (13:05)

God promised that one of David's descendants would rule over Israel, and then over all nations, forever (Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 7:14).

Jesus is already reigning in heaven with complete authority over both heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22).

To fulfill God's promise to David, Jesus must return to earth, re-establish the Davidic throne over Israel, and rule over the whole earth forever (Luke 1:32-33).

B. Manner (17:30)

Jesus will descend from heaven as the victorious, conquering King over all creation.

1. Personal (18:08)

Jesus is coming back *in person* to finish his work.

After Jesus' resurrection, he explained that he was going to send the Holy Spirit to empower the church for ministry (Acts 1:4-5).

After Jesus' ascension, two angels appeared and told the apostles that Jesus would *personally* return in the future (Acts 1:11).

Many New Testament writers and figures argued that Jesus will return personally to consummate God's messianic kingdom on earth.

2. **Physical (22:23)**

Jesus didn't give up his humanity when he ascended into heaven; he has both a divine nature and a human nature.

To complete his human work, Jesus must return in his full humanity, including his body:

- The promises made to Abraham and David can only be fulfilled through Jesus' *humanity*.
- Jesus has to return in his human nature in order to complete his work as the prophet like Moses.
- The angels at his ascension said that he'd come back physically (Acts 1:11).

The New Testament consistently teaches that when Jesus returns, he'll appear in his glorified physical human body.

3. **Visible (24:43)**

When Jesus returns in his glorified human body, we'll be able to see him.

The New Testament explicitly states that Jesus will be seen when he returns (1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:27-30).

Everyone on earth will see him because Jesus' return will be an earth-shattering event.

4. **Triumphant (27:50)**

Jesus' first coming did not appear triumphant:

- born to a poor, humble family
- no political or military power
- condemned and executed as a criminal

Jesus "made himself nothing" – meaning he veiled his divine glory (Philippians 2:7-8).

When Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the Father revealed the glory Jesus has always possessed as God (John 17:5).

When Jesus returns, his glory will be on full display:

- He'll come with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).
- He'll be announced "with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- He'll come with blazing fire and angelic armies (2 Thessalonians 1:7).
- He'll be crowned with many crowns, followed by the armies of heaven, and carrying an iron scepter to rule the nations (Revelation 19:11-16).
- Everyone will bow before his power and authority; no one will be left to oppose him (Philippians 2:9-11).
- His throne will be in the New Jerusalem, and his glory will be so bright that the city won't need lamps or even the sun (Revelation 22:3-5).
- His heavenly kingdom will spread out to encompass the entire world (Revelation 11:15).

III. The Signs of the Times (32:45)

The "signs of the times" are the events that indicate the progress of God's eschatological timeline.

Three stages of the eschaton or "last days":

- inauguration – Jesus' first advent
- continuation – time in which we now live
- consummation – when Jesus returns

A. Divine Mystery (33:39)

The timing of Christ's return is a divine mystery.

From the perspective of his *human* nature, even Jesus didn't know when he would return (Matthew 24:36, 42-44).

Scripture says clearly that only God knows the timing of Christ's return.

B. Significant Precursors (36:41)

Scripture mentions several circumstances that are precursors to Jesus' return.

These circumstances create legitimate expectations for how the future may unfold, and they warn and encourage us as we prepare for Christ's arrival.

1. Demonic opposition (37:41)

A particularly terrible period of demonic opposition will precede Jesus' return ("the Great Tribulation").

In the Great Tribulation, demons will empower false prophets to perform misleading signs and wonders (Revelation 16:13-14; Matthew 24:24).

2. **Human opposition (39:28)**

Many human beings will cooperate with the demonic opposition to God. For instance:

- two beasts with power to control societies and governments (Revelation 13)
- “the false prophet” (Revelation 16:13, 19:20, 20:10)
- “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-10)
- false prophets and false Christs (Matthew 24:24)
- many antichrists (1 John 2:18)

3. **Worldwide evangelism (42:36)**

The kingdom will successfully present its gospel message to the nations (Matthew 24:14).

Jesus associated the Great Commission with the entire continuation of the kingdom until the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).

When Jesus returns, the church will include members from every tribe, language, people and nation (Revelation 7:9).

C. Interpretive Strategies (45:24)

Evangelical interpretive strategies exhibit four main tendencies with regard to the “signs of the times”:

- Preterism – the precursors to Christ’s return appeared in our past and will not be repeated in the future
- Futurism – the precursors to Christ’s return haven’t appeared yet, but will appear in the future
- Historicism – the precursors to Christ’s return are associated with actual people and events throughout history
- Idealism – the precursors to Christ’s return are related to abstract concepts and general principles

These interpretive strategies all can be used as tools to help us understand various aspects of Scripture.

IV. The Millennium (49:56)

Millennium – A period of one thousand years

The millennium – the eschatological period of Christ’s reign mentioned in Revelation 20:2-7

Evangelicals often disagree over where to place the millennium in the eschatological timeline.

A. Historic Premillennialism (53:08)

Premillennialism – belief that Jesus will return before the millennium begins

Historic – this view has been held throughout church history

Basic views (*variants):

- The church will go through the great tribulation just prior to Jesus' return.
- When Jesus arrives, he'll gather all living believers, bind Satan's influence, and begin his earthly reign.
- Christ will reign physically on earth during the millennium.

*Historic Premillennialists differ on whether the millennium will be a literal one thousand years or a long unspecified length of time.

- Believers that remain alive when Jesus returns will be gathered to him in the air.
- Believers will immediately return to earth with Jesus as part of his victorious military parade.
- Believers will live on earth during Christ's millennial reign.

*Some historic premillennialists believe the rapture will include resurrected believers. Others argue that the resurrection of believers won't take place until the final judgment at the end of the millennium.

- During the millennium, believers and unbelievers alike will enjoy earthly blessings, peace and prosperity.
- The millennium will be far more glorious than our current age.
- Unbelievers that have died won't be resurrected until the end of the millennium, but those living will still be on earth.
- There will still be sin, corruption, and death.

- Sinners will still seek salvation (Isaiah 11:10, 11).
- Satan's rebellion will take place at the end of the millennium, followed by the resurrection of those not previously resurrected.
- The final judgment will come, and God's eternal reign over the new heavens and new earth will be fully realized

B. Dispensational Premillennialism (59:31)

Dispensationalism – God works in different ways during different eras or “dispensations.”

Basic views:

- Jesus will return *before* the millennium.
- Believers will be resurrected before the millennium begins.
- Jesus will reign physically on earth *during* the millennium.
- Unbelievers will be resurrected and judged *after* the millennium.
- *All* believers will be raptured to heaven before the great tribulation begins, and will remain there until the end of the millennium.
- God sent Jesus to be the Messiah for the nation of Israel in order to fulfill his promises to Israel in the Old Testament.
- When Israel rejected Jesus as their Messiah, God put his plans for them on hold and raised up the Gentiles in the church.
- God still intends to fulfill his promises to *national* Israel.
- God will rapture the church before the tribulation and deal with Israel during the millennium.
- Those who remain on earth after the rapture will undergo the great tribulation, which will last for seven years.

- At the end of the tribulation, Jesus will return, and the millennium will begin.
- Jesus will restore the nation of Israel and visibly reign over all nations from his throne in Jerusalem.
- God will fulfill his Old Testament promises to the nation of Israel (Amos 9:11-15).
- At the end of the millennium, Satan will instigate a rebellion, but God will completely defeat Satan and his armies.
- God will resurrect the unbelievers, plus any believers that came to faith and died after the rapture.
- The last judgment will take place, and the final state in the new heavens and new earth will begin.

C. **Postmillennialism (1:03:31)**

Postmillennialism – belief that Jesus will return after the millennium ends

Basic views (*variants):

- During the millennium, Jesus is physically in heaven while he reigns spiritually on earth.
- The millennium is an age of success for the gospel that prepares the earth for Christ's return, which some believe is:

*Some postmillennialists believe the millennium stretches from Jesus' ascension to his return; others think it will be the last thousand years before he comes back.

- The millennium will produce greater and greater success for the gospel and the church throughout the world.

- Christ will successfully defeat his enemies *before* he returns (1 Corinthians 15:25).
- The millennium will be a time of increasing victory for the kingdom of God.
- Satan’s rebellion will occur at the end of the millennium, and he will be defeated when Christ returns.
- The rapture will include resurrected and still-living believers.
- Believers will meet the Lord in the air and immediately return with him as part of his victorious military parade.
- Unbelievers will also be resurrected when Christ returns.
- Jesus will render his final judgments on both believers and unbelievers.
- Jesus will usher in the new heavens and new earth, and the final state will begin.

D. Amillennialism (1:07:53)

Amillennialism – “no millennium”; belief that the millennium is only figurative and won’t literally be one thousand years long

Basic views (*variants):

- The millennium is the entire period between Christ’s ascension and return.
- During the millennium, Jesus reigns over the earth from his throne in heaven.
- Jesus will return *after* the millennium.

- The church's experience, success and growth will be determined by the actions of the church itself and by God's free acts of providence.

*Some amillennialists believe the great tribulation occurred early in church history; others associate it with Satan's rebellion at the end of the millennium.

- Jesus will crush Satan's rebellion when he returns.
- Jesus will rapture resurrected and still-living believers, and immediately return with them to earth.
- Unbelievers will be resurrected, and Jesus will render his final judgments on everyone.
- Jesus will usher in the new heavens and new earth, and the final state will begin.

Each of these views is held by evangelical Christians, so we should be humble, charitable and teachable as we study the millennial timeline.

V. Conclusion (1:12:34)

9. What does the term “amillennialism” literally mean? What is the amillennial view of the millennium, and how is it different from postmillennialism?

Application Questions

1. How much do the people in your Christian community understand about the kingdom of God? How might this affect your ministry to them?
2. God's covenant with Abraham can seem very removed from modern-day Christians. What are some ways that the Abrahamic covenant is still relevant today?
3. When you contemplate the future earthly reign of Christ, what do you look forward to the most? Why?
4. The New Testament teaches that when Jesus returns, he'll appear triumphantly "with power and great glory." How does our hope in a future triumphant return of Christ reassure us in our daily struggles and trials?
5. How is it possible that Jesus didn't know the date of his return? Why do you think God made this a divine mystery, even for Jesus?
6. The circumstances that Scripture says will precede Christ's return create legitimate expectations for how the future may unfold. How do these precursors to the second coming warn and encourage you as you prepare for Christ's arrival?
7. The lesson describes four evangelical interpretive strategies (preterism, futurism, historicism, idealism). How does each strategy help us understand various aspects of Scripture?
8. Do you consider yourself to be a premillennialist, postmillennialist or amillennialist? Why? What passages in Scripture can you cite to support your position?
9. Why is it important to acknowledge, along with Justin Martyr, that "many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians" do not share our same views about the timing and details of the millennium?
10. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

Glossary

Abraham – Old Testament patriarch, son of Terah, father of the nation of Israel with whom God made a covenant in Genesis 15 and 17 promising innumerable descendants and a special land

Amillennialism – A view of eschatology in which the millennium of Revelation 20 refers to the time between the first and second comings of Christ when Christ reigns in heaven; Christians continue to suffer tribulation, but the church grows and experiences blessings

Antichrist – A person or entity that will have great evil influence in the last generation before Christ returns; sometimes associated with the "man of lawlessness"

Ascension – Event forty days after the resurrection in which Jesus was taken up bodily into heaven in full view of his apostles

Chiliasm – alternate term for "millennialism"; from a Greek word meaning "thousand"

Consummation – Third and final stage of inaugurated eschatology when Christ will return and fulfill God's ultimate purpose for all of history

Continuation – Second or middle stage of inaugurated eschatology; the period of the kingdom of God after Christ's first advent but before the final victory

David – Second Old Testament king of Israel who received the promise that his descendant would sit on the throne and reign forever

Dispensational premillennialism – A view of eschatology that teaches: God works in different ways during different eras or "dispensations"; God has a different plan for Israel than he has for the church; there will be a pre-tribulation rapture of the church prior to Christ's second coming; when Jesus arrives, the millennium will begin, and Jesus will physically reign on earth for a thousand years

Eschatology – The study or doctrine of the last days

Futurism – Belief that most prophecies in the Bible haven't yet been fulfilled but will be fulfilled in the future

General eschatology – The study of God's universal acts of judgment and salvation in the last days

General resurrection – The resurrection of all people in order to face God's final judgment when Christ returns in glory

Great tribulation – A particularly terrible period of demonic opposition that will precede Jesus' return

Historic premillennialism – A view of eschatology held throughout church history that teaches that the church will go through the great tribulation prior to Jesus' return; when Jesus arrives, the millennium will begin, and he will physically reign on earth for a thousand years

Historicism – Belief that an adequate understanding of anything can only be gained by considering the place it occupies in history; relates biblical accounts to actual people and events throughout history

Idealism – Belief that reality cannot exist independently of the human mind; focuses on abstract concepts and general principles

Inaugurated eschatology – View of the end times that says the age to come has begun (been "inaugurated"), but hasn't yet come in all its fullness; the "already, not yet"

Inauguration – First stage in inaugurated eschatology; refers to Christ's first coming and the ministries of his apostles and prophets

Kenosis – Jesus' act of veiling his divine glory during his first advent

Martyr, Justyn – (ca. A.D. 100 - 165) Early Christian apologist who converted to Christianity as an adult and was martyred for his beliefs

Millennium, the – The eschatological period of Christ's reign mentioned in Revelation 20; thought by some to be exactly one thousand years

Postmillennialism – View of eschatology that believes Jesus will return to establish his eternal kingdom after reigning from heaven during the "millennium" (not literally a thousand years, but a period of church expansion and improvement of the entire earth)

Premillennialism – View of eschatology that believes Jesus will return before the millennium and physically reign for 1,000 years on the earth

Preterism – Belief that most prophecies in the Bible have already been fulfilled

Prophecy – Divinely-inspired proclamation or revelation

Rapture – Primarily a dispensational term referring to an eschatological event in which believers will be caught up in the air with Christ