

THE → WHOLE STORY

Week 7: Eternity-Return, Reconciliation, and Reign of Christ

Titus 2:12-13, Matthew 24:36-51, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 42-58

OPEN

Welcome to our series called **“The whole story.”** Playing our part in the drama of redemption requires that we know the whole story from Creation (Act 1) to New Creation (Act 7). So far we have traced the story from creation, through the fall, Israel, Jesus, the church, and God’s mission. This final week we discuss eschatology (“last days”) with a view on eternity the ultimate place the whole story of scripture points to. Instead of falling in the ditches of obsession or indifference our goal will be to reclaim footing on the path of truth. Eschatology provides us blessed hope to live in the present, in light of the future return, reconciliation and reign of Christ our king. Would we look expectantly for that day praying along with the early church, “Come Lord!”

SHARE & RECONNECT

- What immediately comes to mind when you hear the word eschatology (last days) or the topic of end times? What has shaped that view?
- Eschatology provides hope to live life in the present in light of the future return of Christ our king and his kingdom. How much has this hope in Christ’s return shaped your own personal faith? When have you found yourself longing for Christ’s return praying “Come Lord!”?

READING

- Read Matt 24:36,42-44, Acts 1:11, Hebrews 9:28, 2 Corinthians 4:14
 - What do these passage teach us about the second coming of Christ?
 - What will his coming be like?

? REFLECT

Jesus will return suddenly, visibly, personally, and bodily. His resurrection provides a model for our own resurrection at his second coming.

- Read 2 Corinthians 15:12-19
 - What does this passage say about how essential the resurrection of Jesus is for our salvation? How is Christ's resurrection connected to our own resurrection at his second coming?
- Read Philippians 3:20-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:42-49
 - What do these passage say about the resurrected bodies that we will have at the return of Christ? (*Note that "spiritual bodies" in 1 Cor 15:44 does not mean non-physical but a body that has life consistent with the power and character of the Holy Spirit.*)
- Our existence with Christ will not be some type of spiritual disembodiment but we will exist as he does with a resurrected and perfected body! Jesus is not done with the physical world but will return and restore all things including our physical bodies.
 - What does this teach you about God's love for his good creation? What does this teach you about how God views you as a person?
- Read Titus 2:11-13.
 - What does Paul say about how we are to live in the present as we wait for the blessed hope of Christ's return?

- Read Revelation 21:1-5

The return of Christ includes the restoration of all things including a new heavens and earth. The story of scripture is of God dwelling with people on earth (Eden) and ends with God once again dwelling with people on a renewed heaven and earth. Our eschatological hope is full reconciliation when heaven meets earth again where we get to dwell in the physical presence of Jesus Christ our eternal king!

- How does understanding of heaven not being "out there" but rather here in a renewed heaven and earth impact your understanding? How does this fit with the rest of scripture with God coming down to dwell with people (creation, temple, Jesus, Holy Spirit)?

□ PRAY

- Spend some time praying the early Christian prayer of Maranatha which means "Come Lord!" (1 Cor 16:22).
- In what way do you need the truth of the future blessed hope to strengthen your faith today? Pray that for one another.