

Is eschatology essentially a question of hermeneutic?

Gaffin: All the promises of God are fulfilled in Christ (crucified and raised) - thus amillennialism.

Poythress: Christo-centricity is key: Christ is final Israel & heir of OT promises. Before you look at Rev. 20, think about the millennial debates from the OT prophetic perspective - be careful of wooden literalism: prophecy is visions, not photographs.

Waldron: Literal interpretation is a term that doesn't make any progress in the debate.

When did biblical eschatology begin?

Gaffin: It begins in eternity with God's decrees and purpose in creation: man as image-bearer. But don't confuse decree with its realization in history. The first coming of Christ is hugely eschatological, not only his second coming (Heb. 1.1-2). Eschatology is elliptical - two foci. Eschatology and soteriology are essentially inseparable!

Poythress: A concrete case of Gaffin's thoughts is Gen 2: God rests, Adam is in God's image, the implication is when man has successfully subdued the earth, man will rest. That happened in Christ. There is an anticipation of full eschatology in Gen 1. Confirmation of righteousness - our actual active righteousness someday.

Does Jesus restore man to Adam's original condition?

Riddlebarger: Yes and more! Not just Eden, but glorification - New Jerusalem.

Is protology (doctrine of first things) eschatological?

Waldron: Yes, there was eschatology before there was soteriology. History was going somewhere before the fall. Redemption is putting that historical goal back on the track.

MacArthur said: "Get Israel right and you will get eschatology right." What about "Get the garden right and you will get eschatology right"?

Waldron: You have to understand creation and Eden to put eschatology in place - Israel is subordinate to that original purpose for mankind.

Riddlebarger: MacArthur's statement makes perfect sense for a dispensationalist. Aoub the garden? Put Christ at the center: He is the true Israel, all promises made to Israel are fulfilled in Christ.

Poythress: Get Christ right and you'll get Israel right and you'll get the garden right. Hermeneutics is a spiral. We reinterpret the garden in the light of Christ as second Adam (progressive revelation). Eschatology is built into the 7th day rest - but our fuller understanding comes from the unfolding of that plan and its fulfillment in Christ.

Gaffin: We re-interpret Gen 1-3 in the light of progressive revelation and christo-centrism. A particularly instructive passage is 1Co 15.45ff - Christ as last Adam. The resurrected Christ is compared w/pre-fall Adam. The passage lists no one before Adam; there's no one between Christ & Adam. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David are not brought into the picture - they are below the horizon of Paul's concern. Christ is eschatology.

If Christ is the last Adam, is the church the last Eve?

Gaffin: I've never thought of that before. The church is Christ's eschatological possession - where his people are gathered together.

Poythress: Two imageries are present in Rev 21-22 - final garden (heightening of Eden) & language of church as bride of Christ. [*My note: is the church the bride or is the New Jerusalem the bride?*]

Moderator: Eph. 5 - before the fall man should leave, cleave & become one flesh - this was before the fall and it applies to the church. That's prophetic, right? [*My note: analogy, not necessarily typological.*]

Riddlebarger: It's implied that the church is like Eve, but don't take it too far.

Poythress: II Cor 11.3 compares church to Eve; betrothed to Christ. What is the church? We're back to presuppositions. The true church: communion w/ Father, Son & Spirit - not external institutional church.

Is amillennialism like pessimillennialism? No hope, light or optimism?

[*My note: funny, this accusation normally gets aimed at pre-mill!*]

Gaffin: Never quote Mt.19-20 w/out v. 18 - being spoken by the resurrected Jesus. The eschatological lordship of Christ is optimistic! Mk 10.29-30 - even in persecution, there is still optimism in eventual restoration & reward. Acts 14 - blessing as a result of the preached gospel. Col 1.24 - missiological task of church fulfills.

Poythress: Again, Great Commission is optimism. Keep a historical perspective: 100 years ago, amillennialists didn't have the already / not yet perspective on eschatology.

Riddlebarger: Optimism is gospel-related, not cultural and social - we're not talking about a worldwide cultural christianization of all societies.

Poythress: I'm very optimistic about the total social & cultural christianization of all nations: under the coming reign of Christ!

Waldron: There are societal implications to the gospel. An important paradigm comes from the parable of wheat/tares - both good and evil grow together (we tend to think that the prosperity of one indicates the loss of the other - not so).

Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis with the Christ of Eschatology (John V. Fesko)

This is a recommended book for the Scriptural underpinnings of covenant theology.

Ezek. 40-48 - how does it fit into a biblical theology of the temple?

Waldron: Ed Clouny's treatment of the temple. It is not just that a literal reading means more sacrifices: a literal interpretation means the reinstatement of the Zadokite priesthood, circumcision, exclusion of gentiles from the temple, the Jewish religious calendar and all - this doesn't work. The temple is fulfilled in Rev - city w/river flowing.

Riddlebarger: Trying to turn it into a literal temple undercuts the beauty of the passage.

Poythress: Jacob flees Esau, goes to Bethel and sees the angels on the ladder - he calls it House-of-God, but there's no physical structure! The point is not an edifice - the point is what the temple does: it mediates God's presence w/ man. The temple is symbolic and fulfilled in the mediation of Christ. Jn. 2 - Jesus' own body spoken of as 'temple.' Ezekiel has a vision, not a photograph of the future. Using the earlier types (tabernacle and Solomonic tabernacle) to talk about the same antitype - mediation of God's presence w/man.

Gaffin: I haven't spent a lot of time in the details of this passage. Regarding a biblical theology of temple: that whole chunk of Scripture focuses on Christ. See 1Co. 1.20 - all promises are Amen in Christ. Paul calls the church "God's building" in 1Co 3.9.

Jn. 1.51 - Jacob's ladder

Poythress: This fits what I just said. The Son of Man is the antitype of that ladder - again, Christ is the mediator between God's presence and man on earth.

Supersessionism / Replacement theology

Waldron: Amillennial and similar theologies - the church replaces Israel as the real people of God.

Poythress: Do we say "replace" or "fulfill?" Christ is the true Israel (Mt. 2 - Hos. 11.1). Gentiles & Jews (Gal. 3.last) both participate in the blessings of salvation. Rom 11 - it's not that the whole tree is switched: some branches are removed, some are grafted in. There's an emphasis on continuity - the focus is on Christ as true Israel & Abraham's seed (Gal. 3.16)

Riddlebarger: Israel is the amillennialist's pink elephant. Is the OT judeo-centric? As a Christian, I'm reading the OT through Christ-glasses. Even the national promises are fulfilled in Christ.

Is OT Israel typological of anything?

Gaffin: Israel is God's chosen son & firstborn. The disciples asked: "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel now?" Jesus begins to correct that question and does so throughout the NT. The real question is "when will Israel be restored to the kingdom?" Rom. 11. I don't like 'replacement' but prefer 'supersession' in the sense of 'fulfillment' - Israel find its true place in the church.

What are the problems with reading the OT as judeo-centric?

Waldron: if the OT is judeo-centric and its fulfillment is in a millennial Judaism, that leads to the conclusion that Christianity is not the fulfillment of the OT. But... if Christianity is not the fulfillment of the OT, what is Christianity??

Poythress: Gal 4.26: the Jerusalem above is free and she is our mother, ref. to Isa. 54 and the expansion of the people of God. Paul sums up the people of God in Jerusalem - Revelation confirms this. Christ's own Israelite heritage is key. He is heir. If I'm in him, I'm heir to everything. If I'm not the heir to *everything* then Paul was wrong in Gal. 3

Continuity & discontinuity between now and later (human bodies, animal kingdom, technology, etc)?

Poythress: 1Co 15 - transformation involves both continuity and discontinuity. We won't lose anything in the next world that we'll really miss compared to true blessing in God.

What about the effects of surgery, tattoos and hair-loss?

Riddlebarger: [humorous] Hair is a result of the fall! My dog will NOT be in heaven.

Waldron: Rom 8 on the resurrection of creation implies that perhaps animals will end up in the eternal state.

Grand Canyon is a result of the fall (curse of flood) - will it be part of the new earth?

Gaffin: Rom 8 - resurrection of entire creation - we'll see.

What are the political implications of amillennialism?

Riddlebarger: American foreign policy is driven by an interest in national Israel. but if Christ is the true Israel, then America, Saudi Arabia and Israel are on the same standing before God. the return to the land now facilitates the national conversion to come.

Heb. 4.11 - already or not yet?

Waldron: Heb. 4.3 is not already, it's durative - we are in the process of entering that rest. this passage is addressed to Christians, encouraging them to persevere through to the eternal inheritance.

What is holding back the rise of the man of sin (II Thess. 2)?

Riddlebarger: the preaching of the gospel. Restrainer is an interesting grammatically – referred as both who and what, cf Rev. 20. The revealing is linked to that man's destruction.

Poythress: I don't know - I don't know if Paul knew.

Gaffin: cf. Vos - the best interpretation of this passage will be its fulfillment.